

Fact Sheet

The number of children attending the Perth Children's Hospital Emergency Department (PCH ED) with a sporting injury has remained high over the past five years, with an average of 5,100 individual cases per year¹.

Older children are at greater risk of sustaining a sporting injury. This may be due to fewer modified game rules as children get older, as well as the higher number of older children participating in competitive sports compared with younger age groups. Males account for two-thirds of all sporting injury presentations to the PCH ED¹.

Sport and physical activity play a vital role in childhood development, helping children build physical skills, confidence, and social connections. However, concerns about injury risks can sometimes be a barrier to participation.

Australian Rules Football is the most commonly recorded activity associated with sporting injuries, accounting for 12 percent of sporting presentations to the PCH ED¹. This is followed by cycling, basketball, trampolining and soccer.

Common injury presentations include fractures, sprains and strains, bruising, cuts, dislocations and internal injuries¹. These injuries most often occur to the upper and lower limbs, as well as the face, head, neck and torso.

Sporting injuries most commonly occur in the cooler winter months between May and August¹. This aligns with the start of the winter organised sporting season, when many children are learning new skills or refreshing skills they haven't used since the previous year. Not surprisingly, injuries mostly happen over the weekend on Saturdays and Sundays.

Treating Sports Injuries

Early treatment of injuries can often reduce the severity and help prevent any further damage.

To keep children safe during sport, consider the following:

- Learn basic first aid and CPR. All parents, sporting officials, and coaches should be familiar with essential first aid and resuscitation skills.
- Keep a fully stocked first aid kit at the sporting club, at home and in your car.
- Ensure emergency contact numbers are easily accessible in an emergency.
- Teach children basic injury management, including when to stop playing and how to seek help.

- Do not allow injured players to return to sport without medical clearance. Continuing to play may cause further harm.
- If in doubt – DO NOT PLAY

If a child receives a sporting injury, the following injury management approaches should be used²:

- DRABCD (Danger, Response, Airway, Breathing, Compression and Defibrillation)

For sprain and strain injuries, apply:

- RICER (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation, Referral)
- NO HARM (NO Heat, Alcohol, Running or Massage)

For more information on treating sporting injuries visit: www.sma.org.au

Fact Sheet

How to stay active and safe

It is important that parents, carers, coaches, and participants understand common sporting injuries and how they can be prevented.

To help minimise the risk of injuries, the following preventative measures can be followed:

- Make sure your child wears the appropriate protective equipment for their sport. This may include mouthguards, protective eyewear, helmets, padding, suitable footwear, and gloves.
- Stay well hydrated during sporting activities, especially in warmer weather.
- Provide shade and sunscreen, and encourage children to wear appropriate clothing and hats.
- Always warm up before sport and cool down afterwards to prepare the body and reduce the risk of injury.
- Young children should take part in modified sports that use age-appropriate rules and equipment. Coaches should ensure these modifications are followed. Examples include Auskick, Minkey, NetSetGo, Kanga Cricket and others.
- Children should attend training sessions to learn and practise skills before moving into competitive games.
- Training should gradually prepare children for competition, including a warm-up, skill development, game-like practice, and a cool down.
- Avoid playing when tired, unwell, or injured, and make sure children have appropriate recovery time.
- Improving fitness and skill levels can also help reduce the likelihood of injury.
- Sporting grounds and facilities should be checked regularly by the appropriate person. Any damaged playing surfaces, fencing, lights, posts, padding, or rubbish should be identified and reported.
- Make sure your coach or manager is aware of any existing medical conditions that may affect your child during sporting activities. This should be communicated before the season begins and updated throughout the year to keep key staff informed.
- Ensure your team is entered in the correct level of competition, appropriate to the children's age, size and skill level.
- A trained and well-equipped first aid officer should be present at all games and competitions.
- Schools should establish clear rules and guidelines for children playing sports during recess and lunch to ensure safe participation.
- If an injury does occur, seek immediate medical attention.

1. Posa, I., Jamieson, K., & Skarin, D. Kidsafe WA Childhood Injury Report: Sporting Injuries 2019–2024. Perth (WA): Kidsafe WA (AU); 2025 December.

2. Sports Medicine Australia (n.d.). Safety Guidelines for Children and Young People in Sport and Recreation. Retrieved from: www.sma.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/childrensafetyguidelines-fulldoc.pdf

Kidsafe WA © 2026

Excerpts may be copied for educational purposes. Written permission is required to copy this fact sheet in its entirety.

For more information www.kidsafewa.com.au
kidsafe@kidsafewa.com.au
(08) 6244 4880