

National Alliance For Youth Sports (Nays) Issues Summer Sports Safety Advisory

Safety Gear, Skin Protection and Hydration Are Key for Safe Play

With the summer sports season fast approaching, NAYS - the nation's leading youth sports educator, issued a sports safety advisory to provide guidance for parents in nearly three-quarters of U.S. households with school-aged children who participate in organized sports(1). Last summer, 5.5 million kids were injured while playing sports(2). The NAYS Sports Safety Advisory was developed to help parents and volunteer coaches keep active kids injury-free and having fun on the field this summer.

A task force of 11 NAYS volunteer coaches* from across the country developed the NAYS Sports Safety Advisory based on their 100+ years of combined experience on the sidelines and in the youth sports medical, safety, nutritional and psychological arenas. To encourage practical use, NAYS outlined its advisory tips to spell SAFE:

- Safety gear - Wear properly-fitting protective gear to avoid common sports injuries such as sprains and fractures.
- Apply sun block - Apply waterproof sun block with an SPF rating of 15 or greater every two hours to protect exposed skin from harmful ultraviolet rays.
- Fluids - Drink enough of the right kinds of fluids before, during and after activity. Research shows sports drinks with electrolytes, like Gatorade, hydrate best.
- Enjoy the game! Following these guidelines will help kids have more fun.

"We created this advisory because so many kids show up to summer sports practice prepared," said Fred Engh, president, CEO and founder, National Alliance For Youth Sports. "The advisory highlights the most important messages we have to communicate to parents and coaches so they can help kids play safely and have fun."

The task force of coaches recommended that parents keep these three things in mind to prepare their kids for safe participation in summer sports:

Safety Gear

- To protect your children from major sports injuries such as broken bones, concussions, dislocated joints and torn ligaments, make sure they wear properly fitting protective gear when they're active. Protective gear can serve as a safety net when a child's physical or mental function isn't at full capacity.
- Protective gear is sport-specific, but some of the most popular summer sports require shin pads, knee pads, helmets, face masks, safety goggles and rubber cleats. For more information on safety gear recommended for a wide variety of sports, visit www.safekids.org.
- To avoid common ankle and knee injuries, send kids to practice with cleats that are best for their sport and are in good condition to provide adequate ankle support.

Skin Protection

- Protect your kids from the damage of ultraviolet rays by making sure they have sun block, hats and sunglasses for all activities, including practices and games.
- To keep kids safe while playing outdoors, apply waterproof sun block with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) rating of 15 or greater to exposed skin at least every two hours. If a child is sweating a lot or swimming, it may be necessary to reapply the sun block more frequently.

- Remember, SPF numbers refer to the product's ability to block out the sun's burning rays (UVB). If your child has skin that burns easily, you may need to use a sun block with a higher SPF or reapply more frequently.

Hydration

- Kids are at greater risk for dehydration and heat illness than adults when they are active in the heat. The good news is dehydration can easily be prevented by making sure kids drink enough of the right kinds of fluids before, during and after activity.
- Sweat contains more than water. To stay safe, kids need to replace the fluid and electrolytes they lose in sweat by drinking a sports drink.
- To make sure kids drink enough, pack a squeeze bottle and encourage kids to drink on a schedule-- not just when they're thirsty. After activity, encourage kids to drink 8-12 oz. of fluid for each pound of fluid they lost through sweat.

To reach the most parents with the NAYS Sports Safety Advisory before the start of the summer sports season, NAYS plans to post the advisory on their site, www.NAYS.org, as well as distribute it to more than 400,000 parents, volunteer coaches and youth sport administrators through the Youth Sports Journal, a part of Sporting Kid Magazine.

The National Alliance For Youth Sports (NAYS) is America's leading advocate for positive and safe sports and activities by providing programs and services that add value to existing youth sports programs. Based in West Palm Beach, Florida, NAYS offers programs and services for everyone involved in youth sports experiences, including professional administrators, volunteer administrators, volunteer coaches, officials, parents and young athletes.

For additional information about the National Alliance For Youth Sports, please visit www.NAYS.org.

*NAYS Coach Task Force Members:

- Fred Engh, President, CEO and Founder, National Alliance For Youth Sports
- MaryBeth Bash, Andrews Air Force Base, former NYSCA Volunteer Coach of the Year
- Jackie Berning, Ph.D., RD, Asst. Professor at the Univ. of Colorado, Colorado Springs
- Tina D'Aversa-Williams, publisher and volunteer baseball and soccer coach, Atlanta, GA
- Dr. Mike Gray, exercise physiologist and volunteer football coach, Cincinnati, OH
- Sarah Harris, volunteer basketball coach, Puyallup, WA
- Mike May, SGMA and NYSCA volunteer soccer and baseball coach, Wellington, FL
- Joey Odom, volunteer softball coach, Lake Charles, LA
- Dr. Dan Wann, sports psychologist at Murray State University, Murray, KY
- Jeff Wootten, NYSCA 2003 Volunteer Coach of the Year, Ocean City, MD
- Willis Whalen, Miami Dolphins Youth Coordinator, flag and tackle volunteer coach, Miami, FL

(1) National SAFE KIDS Campaign - www.safekids.org.

(2) American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.