



SINGAPORE
SPORTS COUNCIL

Sports
Safety

Safe Baseball and Softball Guide

Think Safe. Play Safe. Stay Safe.

A Sports Safe Singapore

The Singapore Sports Council (SSC) recognises that safety must be a fundamental component of a sporting culture and a prerequisite for every healthy lifestyle. Therefore, SSC has set a corporate goal of zero injuries, in the belief that all accidents are preventable. Emphasising the need for personal accountability, SSC also urges people to be responsible for the safety of others. SSC's first Sports Safety Division was formed in 2006 directly under the purview of the CEO's office. It is tasked to promote safety throughout Singapore's sporting community and inculcate a safety-first mentality in the minds of every stakeholder. For more information, please visit www.sportssafety.ssc.gov.sg

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Another initiative by the Sports Safety Division, Singapore Sports Council

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Introduction



Baseball and softball are popular sports played worldwide. In Singapore, these sports are gaining popularity as more schools introduce them to their students and alumni members join clubs upon graduation. The national teams are also active in regional and international competitions.



As with any sport, injury can occur. Recognising the various safety aspects of the sports can help prevent some of these injuries. This safety booklet provides some general safety guidelines as well as safety best practices specific to softball and baseball to help you and your team play the game safely.



The People

The Batter

Every player has a chance to bat to score points for their team. He / She swings the bat at a pitched ball that the pitcher aims toward the home plate.

The Pitcher

The pitcher is the player who throws the ball towards the catcher. His / Her aim is to throw a difficult pitch so that the batter is unable to successfully hit the ball.

The Catcher

The catcher is positioned behind the home plate and catches the ball that the pitcher throws and the batter (from the opposing team) misses.

The Fielder

When the opposition team is batting, the players take up defensive positions in the field to catch the balls hit out by the batter.

The Coach

The coach oversees the team's training, performance and competitions. He / She is sometimes assisted by base-coaches during matches.

The Umpire

The umpire is the person in charge of officiating the game. In some competitions, he / she can be assisted by two base umpires.



Getting Prepared

Players should prepare themselves by making sure they use appropriate equipment for the game.

1. Batter's Equipment

A standard batting helmet with inner sponge / sponge-like lining and protective cover for both ears is to be worn by the batter once at play. Coaches should also check to ensure the helmets are in good condition.

For beginners, helmets with face guards and chin straps are available. These can help reduce the risk of injury to the face. Groin guards are also useful in protecting the genitals from any stray balls during training and competitions.

2. Catcher's Equipment

Catchers squat in close proximity to the batters during play and are exposed to stray balls deflected by the batters. Inexperienced batters may also swing and hit the catcher with the bat.

The catcher should don a:

- helmet
- mask
- throat protector
- groin guard
- pair of shin guards
- chest protector
- glove



3. Gloves

Before a game, ensure the glove fits comfortably and the player is able to control the usage. A good, fitting glove is essential for fielding.



4. Footwear

For safety reasons, plastic cleats are used instead of metal ones to prevent inflicting severe injuries especially during collision. Football boots with rubber studs may also be worn. Players should refrain from playing with shoes without studs, such as running shoes.



5. Face Mask

The face mask is useful for players who are just learning to play baseball / softball. It is also mandatory for catchers to wear a face mask as a form of protection against batted balls.

6. Ball

Consider using training or rubberized balls during training. These may be useful for training as the impact of the injury when hit by training or rubberized ball is minimised/lessened.

Environment



It is important to ensure that players are allowed to enjoy themselves and avoid the risk of injury. Environmental factors that need to be checked before training or playing are:

The Playing Field

Both baseball and softball are played on a field known as a 'diamond', with a distinct infield and outfield area. The playing field should be level and have minimal potholes and bumps as fielders and runners are at risk of falls and sprains on an uneven surface. When playing on a new field, the players and coach should inspect the field to identify potential hazards prior to training or competing.

There are several safety features on the field to be highlighted. Firstly, a safety base, which is twice the length of a normal base, is used at the first base. It is usually of a different colour from the first base so that this safety feature is more distinct. The safety base helps to reduce collisions between the runner and the first baseman.

Movable bases, (also known as break-away bases) which are not pinned to the ground, are generally safer. Many injuries occur while players slide into bases and research has shown break-away bases significantly reduce sliding injuries. Runners still have to take precaution not to trip over the bases which might move slightly upon contact.

Soft padding on fences, walls and posts can help prevent injury if players run into them while attempting to catch the ball. Protective screens and fences can be used to protect players in dugouts and spectators watching the game.

The Weather

Singapore has the highest rate of lightning activity and most occurrences happen between 2 - 6pm and last an average of 1 - 1.5 hours. For trainings and games, there should be someone assigned to monitor weather conditions and if necessary, make the call to stop play, remove individuals from the field to a safe shelter, and announce a warning to the spectators.

Common Injuries

The common injuries related to baseball and softball can be categorized as acute or traumatic injury and overuse injury.

Acute / Traumatic Injuries

1. Fractures

These injuries usually result from high-impact collisions that generate enough force to fracture the bones. Typically, it can occur in collisions between players, or between a player and an object (e.g. fixed bases, a hard wall, etc). Fractures are characterized by intense pain, restriction of movement and at times, visible deformities underneath the skin. While first aid can be applied, the player will require a visit to the hospital emergency department.

2. Contusions and Abrasions

These injuries can result from mild trauma (from balls, collisions with other players) or falls. These are fairly common, and the milder forms can be treated with basic first aid and adequate rest.

3. Strains and Sprains

These injuries can be due to collisions, slips or falls, but can also be due to overuse.

Overuse Injuries

Conditioning, rest management and the use of proper techniques are the three most important factors in preventing overuse injuries. Any joint or muscle may be subject to overuse injury, but there are a few more common types of overuse injuries specific to baseball and softball.

1. "Little League Elbow"

A result of repetitive throwing motion that can be characterized initially by pain and decreased performance. Severe cases may include swelling of the joint.

2. "Little League Shoulder"

The result of overhead throwing motion, more common in baseball pitchers. Usually characterized by pain during throwing and decreased performance.

3. Knee and Ankle Sprains

The repetitive throwing motion also tends to place stress on one side of the body (opposite side of the throwing arm). The knee and ankle are also prone to sprains that might be characterized by pain or swelling.



Injury Prevention Tips for Pitchers

Pitchers are more prone to overuse injuries. Young pitchers have to pay close attention to training safety because their bones and growth plates may not have fully matured by the time they start the sport.

To minimize the risk of overuse injuries in young pitchers, it is recommended that they monitor their maximum pitch count per game as follows:.



Age	Number of Pitches
10 and under	75
11 - 12	85
13 - 16	95
17 - 18	105

Other injury prevention tips:

- A good and progressive warm-up routine helps prepare your body, especially your muscles and heart, for increased demand of activity. This will also make you less susceptible to injuries.
- Practice cooling down after your trainings and games to assist in your body's recovery process by releasing any strains sustained.
- Avoid playing when in pain so as not to aggravate the injuries.
- Avoid playing another heavy throwing position such as third base or shortstop in the same game you have pitched in.
- Rest your arm for at least 24 hours after pitching; avoid practicing immediately after a game.
- Keep yourself physically fit all year round to enjoy the game better.



Injury Management

When you suffer any soft tissue injuries (i.e. ligament strains, muscle strains or bruises), the best way to recover is to apply the RICER approach. This approach helps to prevent more damage from being done to the injured area.

Rest

Place yourself in a comfortable position. Keep the injured area supported. Avoid using the injured area for at least 48 - 72 hours as continued activity will increase bleeding and damage.

Ice

Apply ice to the injured area for 20 minutes, every 2 hours for the first 48 - 72 hours after injury. Ice reduces swelling, pain and bleeding. Ice can be used in the following ways:

- Crushed or Cubed ice in a wet towel or plastic bag
- Frozen pea packets in a wet towel
- Cold pack wrapped in a wet towel

In the event that ice is not available, icy or cold water can be used as well.

Caution: Do not apply ice directly to skin.

Compression

Apply a firm wide elastic bandage over the injured area. Where possible, hold ice in place with the bandage. Between ice treatments maintain bandage compression. Applying a bandage will reduce bleeding, swelling, and provide support for the injured area.

Caution: Ensure that the bandage is not too tight. Some signs of the bandage being too tight may include numbness, tingling or the skin turning pale or blue. If these signs or symptoms develop, remove the bandage and reapply again, firmly but not as tightly.

Elevation

Raise the injured area above the level of the heart at all times. A pillow can be used to provide support and comfort. Elevating the injured area reduces bleeding, swelling and pain.

Referral

Arrange to see a qualified health care professional such as a doctor or physiotherapist as soon as possible after the injury. They will determine the extent of your injury and provide advice on treatment and rehabilitation required.

Stay Hydrated



Water is essential to normal body function. During exercise, the major source of water lost from the body is sweat. To avoid a significant decrease in performance, this water must be replaced, both during competitions and training.

Drink before, during and after exercise. You should drink about 500ml of water half an hour before and 250 - 500ml of water every half hour during sports activities. Do not wait until you are thirsty. If you feel thirsty, then you are already too dehydrated to perform at your best.

A good indicator is to make use of the Urine Colour Chart to find out if you are well-hydrated.

Urine Colour Chart									
An easy way to find out if you are well hydrated									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
				DEHYDRATED			SEVERELY DEHYDRATED		

Adapted from Lew, Slater, Nair, and Miller (2010)
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Disclaimer : colours listed may vary slightly from actual colour due to printing.

- Lightly colored urine (1 - 3)
- continue drinking habit
- Darker colored urine (4 - 6)
- drink more fluid during and after training/game
- Very dark colored urine (7 - 9)
- seek advice from sports nutritionist or physiologist



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