



LITTLE LEAGUE ELBOW IN A

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## LITTLE LEAGUE ELBOW

often occurs in baseball pitchers, but can affect any child who plays a sport that involves the overhead throwing motion.

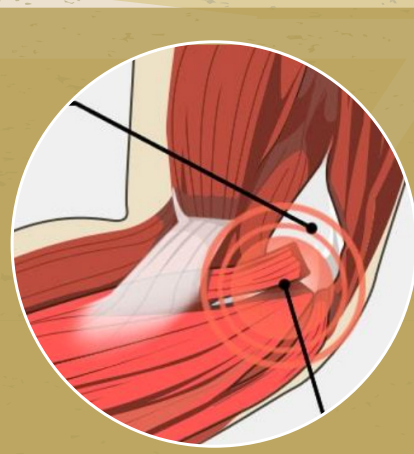


## WHAT IS LITTLE LEAGUE ELBOW?

Inflammation from tendons and/or ligaments at the inside portion of the elbow affects the bone's growth plate. Located where the tendons and ligaments attach, the growth plate is the soft part of the bone that can adapt to lengthen or expand for growth.

Little League Elbow occurs when a child does not properly warm-up, does not gradually prepare for a sports season by strengthening muscles over time, or from overuse. Throwing too many pitches can cause the tendons and ligaments to stretch and pull open the growth plate.

## WHO IS AT RISK?



## CHILDREN 9 AND 14 BETWEEN

are most at risk for Little League Elbow because this is when the growth plate is most active.

## SYMPTOMS OF LITTLE LEAGUE ELBOW

Soreness at the bony notch of the elbow is the first sign of Little League Elbow.

## OTHER SYMPTOMS:

- Constant elbow soreness
- Sharp pain at the elbow
- Pain or soreness when doing other daily activities, such as writing
- Possible numbness or tingling in hands/fingers



## TREATMENT AND RETURN TO PLAY



**REST** Taking a break from the overhead motion in the arm will give the tendons, ligaments and growth plate time to heal.



**COMPRESSION THERAPY** Use an elastic wrap bandage and keep the arm elevated.



**ANTI-INFLAMMATORY MEDICINES** Your doctor may prescribe NSAIDs or medicines like ibuprofen to reduce inflammation and pain.



**REHABILITATION AND STRENGTH CONDITIONING** Your child should work with a strength conditioning coach, physical therapist or athletic trainer to build back strength and flexibility.



**THROWING PROGRESSION** Once the muscles are strong enough to protect the elbow joint, your child can begin a throwing progression program to get back into shape.

- Begin with long tosses, starting closer and working back based on arm strength and pain
- Increase the number of throws by **10% each week**
- Gradually add in pitching or goalie throws or overhead serves



**WARM UPS** It is important to warm up all other muscle and tendon groups in the body, not just those involved in the overhead throws.



## PREVENTING AN ELBOW INJURY

Children who play sports that involve overhead throws should not specialize in any one sport at a young age. They should **participate in multiple sports all year long** that use different muscles and tendons. This leads to being more physically fit overall and helps prevent overuse injuries.

### OTHER WAYS TO PREVENT LITTLE LEAGUE ELBOW:

- Eat a healthy diet and stay hydrated
- Use proper biomechanics
- Gradually prepare for the season
- Only throw fastballs up to **age 14**
- **Adhere to recommended pitch counts**
- Recovery

Athletes should follow a recovery program after every game or practice. Players and parents should ask coaches or athletic trainers for suggestions to keep shoulders and elbows in shape.

SOURCES: Cody Lucas, Certified Athletic Trainer, Miami Valley South Sports Medicine and Greeneview High School; National Athletic Trainers Association, USA Baseball; OrthoKids.org; OrthoInfo.aaos.org