

## Little Leaguer's Shoulder and Elbow

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**Overview-** The number of participants in youth baseball has skyrocketed in the last 5-10 years. In addition to starting at younger ages, young baseball players are frequently participating year-round and sometimes playing on 2 or 3 teams at one time. As a result, the sports medicine community has seen a dramatic rise in the number of players with injured throwing arms. Young athletes are prone to unique injuries about the shoulder and elbow because they have open (active) growth centers. These growth centers are “weak links” compared to the surrounding ligaments. The repetitive nature and mechanics involved in throwing can cause stress injuries and fractures to these growth centers. Left untreated, these stress injuries can lead to chronic pain, early fatigue, and decreased performance.



### Recommended Guidelines:

#### Pitch Count \*

- ◆ 9-10 year-old pitcher
  - 50 pitches per game
  - 75 pitches per week
  - 1,000 pitches per season
  - 2,000 pitches per year
- ◆ 11-12 year-old pitcher
  - 75 pitches per game
  - 100 pitches per week
  - 1,000 pitches per season
  - 3,000 pitches per year
- ◆ 13-15 year-old pitcher
  - 75 pitches per game
  - 125 pitches per week
  - 1,000 pitches per season

#### Pitch Type for Age

- Fastball– 8 years
- Change-up- 10 years
- Curveball– 14 years
- Knuckleball– 15 years
- Slider– 16 years
- Screwball– 17 years

A good rule of thumb is young baseball players should not begin throwing a breaking pitch until he is shaving.

\* Adapted from the USA Baseball Medical & Safety Advisory Committee Position statement on Youth Baseball Injuries

### Tips for Throwing Athletes to Live By:

- It is recommended to take a *3-month break* from throwing activities each year.
- Avoid pitching on *more than 1 team per season*.
- Avoid the *radar gun* and *pitching showcases* for scouts or coaches.
- Engage in *year round fitness*. Maintain *core and leg strength*.
- *The Throwers Ten* exercise program can be used for both prevention and rehabilitation.
- *Warm-up (i.e. light jog)* before throwing. *Rest your arm (from pitching)* at least 48 hours after pitching.
- **Do not play through pain or fatigue.** Early therapy will allow earlier return to play.
- A *quality pitching coach* should emphasize proper form and control before command, velocity, and ball movement. He or she should also understand the importance of the above recommendations.

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