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Keys to Keeping Kids Safe in Sports

Don't let safety precautions take a back seat when it comes to kids in sports. 90% of sports injuries to youth players can be prevented. Therefore, any steps taken to improve the safety of your athletes can have a positive impact. Follow these guidelines in order to keep your players safe on and off the field.

1. **Medical exam:** Have a pre-season physical to confirm that your child is ready and able to compete.
2. **Safety equipment:** Always wear the appropriate equipment, properly fitted, when playing sports.
3. **Conditioning and warm-ups:** Strengthening muscles and warming up prior to activities is vital to help prevent strains, sprains and costly knee injuries.
4. **Heat exhaustion:** This is often fatal, but is 100% preventable. Keep players – especially those who wear helmets -- cool and hydrated in hot weather.
5. **Lightning kills.** Know what to do and when – and enforce the rules. Be extra vigilant in sports with metal equipment like golf clubs, lacrosse sticks and metal bats.
6. **Sexual abuse:** Do not provide opportunity to those with malicious intent to have access to your child. Limit trips or overnights with the team unless you can be there. Teach your child to protect him or herself from abuse and inappropriate relationships with coaches. Be watchful for “special attention” from a coach.
7. **Hazing:** Teach your kids to say no. Despite media attention on the dangers of hazing, coaches and players continue to engage in harmful initiations and rituals, often involving alcohol and sexual or physical abuse.
8. **Soccer goal posts:** No kids should play on, hang from or help move goal posts. There have been at least 29 reported deaths from falling goal posts and all could have been prevented.
9. **Steroids and Performance Enhancing Drugs (PED's):** What you should know about this escalating problem: the fastest growing users of these readily available drugs are teenage girls; steroid use peaks just before spring break, when students are getting ready for the beach; and a new UK study lists steroid users as the main clients at needle exchanges.
10. **Team travel** can be dangerous, even fatal. 15-passenger vans (banned by schools and colleges for their horrific safety record) should NEVER be used by teams. Only properly