

**About . . .**

## **Your Child and Organized Sports**

This Life Advice™ pamphlet about Your Child and Organized Sports was produced by the MetLife Consumer Education Center and reviewed by the Amateur Athletic Union and the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. Editorial services provided by Meredith Custom Publishing.

Few commitments have the kind of payoff that a child receives from playing sports. Sports participation enhances physical fitness during childhood while helping develop healthy habits for adulthood. A child gains experience in cooperation, self-discipline and perseverance, all while having a good time.

### **Reaping the Rewards**

No matter what a child's interests are-baseball, tae kwon do, swimming or running-your child is likely to find a sport that he or she enjoys. And, whether your child chooses an individual or team sport, the health and fitness benefits associated with physical activities are the most obvious. By practicing good fitness and eating habits early in life, a child can increase the chances of growing into a healthy adult.

**Sports participation can motivate the couch potato, occupy the child who has idle time, minimize the habits of the fast-food junkie and relieve stress. Plus, the personal and emotional rewards can last a lifetime-self-esteem, social skills and dedication.**

### **Getting Started**

The best sport for a child is one that the youngster finds fun and interesting. To encourage a healthy and active lifestyle, you might casually expose your child to a variety of physical activities and let the child's desires and abilities act as a guide to further commitment.

**Spend some one-on-one time with your child practicing and learning different sports and recreational activities. Don't limit instruction to one area; instead allow your child the freedom to try different sports.**

If your child is interested in a particular sport, check out the programs available at school, through your city's parks and recreation association, religious organizations or civic clubs. And, make sure the youngster has the proper equipment for the sport-equipment that fits properly, is in good condition and has all the appropriate safety features.

A child is likely to enjoy a sport more if allowed to learn in a relaxed atmosphere while having fun and receiving support and encouragement from adults. Athletics for youngsters should be thought of as a means of entertainment and recreation. Adults shouldn't pressure a young child to focus only on winning even if exceptional promise is shown.

Even a young athlete who might show natural talent in a particular sport must work hard and show dedication in order to succeed. Almost any child even if less skilled than his or her peers can improve with positive support and coaching.

Keep in mind, however, that enrolling your child in an organized sport, is also a commitment on your part. Your child will need appropriate equipment, transportation and, of course, your support.

### **The Doctor's OK**

So your child can enjoy the activity to the fullest, you may want to consult with your doctor about participation in organized sports. A pre-sports checkup should include a complete physical exam.

If your child has experienced chronic health conditions in the past, don't rule out sports participation. Ask your doctor whether a specific activity might be appropriate for your child.

### **Parental Guidance**

Your child will need you more than ever for support and advice in weathering the ups and downs that go along with sports. To help your youngster build confidence and have fun, try to be actively involved in your child's endeavor and keep a good attitude. If your child becomes involved in an organized or team sport, make every effort to attend the practices and games.

In organized sports, teach your child that involvement means certain responsibilities are required-for one's self and towards other participants. Encourage your child to give activities the best effort possible, to be responsible and to respect teammates, coaches and opponents-valuable lessons in sports as well as in life.

When learning a sport, mistakes are inevitable. Parents and coaches can lower the stress level by calmly pointing out that mistakes are opportunities for valuable feedback on areas for improvement. Adults involved in children's sports also should avoid pushing too hard, overprotecting or academically delaying a child for competitive reasons.

### **Fair Play**

A child learns by example. Much of what is seen and heard, and how the child is treated-on the field and off-can have lasting effects. An atmosphere that is fun and educational is likely to promote healthy self-esteem in youngsters, just as a negative and critical climate can have adverse effects. To promote an enjoyable environment, help your child follow a philosophy of "fair play."

Fair play also applies to parents and coaches. Here are some fair-play points for players, parents and coaches:

### **Player Pointers**

Some things for players to keep in mind:

- Enjoy the game!
- Respect teammates, as well as opponents, whether they are winning or losing.

- Remember that the outcome is never as important as the lasting impression of warmth, understanding and pure enjoyment of playing.
- Remember that scoring is most thrilling when it rewards a true achievement.
- Recognize that playing to win is an essential component of competition, but seeking victory at any cost defeats the true meaning of competition.
- Show respect for the referees, umpires and judges at all times, and accept their decisions in a dignified manner.
- Lose gracefully, as well as win gracefully.
- Try your best.

### **Parent Pointers**

Some things for parents to keep in mind:

- Understand that your child will make mistakes.
- Provide transportation to and from all practices and games or meets, and ensure your player is prompt not only in arriving, but also in departing.
- Attend practices and games or meets if your schedule allows. Lend the players your support in a positive manner. Emphasize their accomplishments and efforts.
- Make sure your child never talks with, or leaves with, strangers.
- Have your youngster bring the required equipment to and from all games and practices.
- Practice with your child.
- Avoid material rewards. Stress the joy of the sport.
- Listen. Make your child feel important and encourage contribution to a team effort.
- Be positive and don't criticize. If your child is not performing correctly or improving, suggest an alternate technique with the coach's guidance, such as, "That's pretty good, now how about trying it this way?"
- Be graceful-and not boastful-when your child's team wins.
- Be positive and provide encouragement when your child's team loses or your child fails to place.
- Make fun and technique-development top priorities when practicing.
- Support your child's coach and, before being asked, offer to help in any way possible.
- Don't disagree with the coach or referees on the field or in front of your child. Questions, input and positive suggestions should be discussed privately and calmly.
- Enjoy the excitement of the sport and the opportunity to be with your child.

### **Coach Pointers**

Some things for coaches to keep in mind:

- Have fun!
- Keep winning and losing in perspective.
- Stress the players' appreciation of the game or activity.
- Allow players or participants to try a variety of positions or events.
- Utilize safe techniques and proper methods of play.
- Supervise and control players to avoid injury and conflict.
- Strive to maintain integrity within the sport.
- Know, understand and follow all the rules and policies set forth by clubs, leagues, state and national associations. Remember, the coach has final responsibility for the team and players.
- Encourage moral and social responsibility in players.
- Allow players to have fun, and give them positive feedback.

- Require a parents-only meeting at the beginning of each season and encourage attendance and positive participation. Be sure parents understand your philosophy and rules, and that everyone is sending a consistent message to the players.

### **For More Information**

Reference Materials

*Sports and Success from 6 to 16*

Michael Yessis, Masters Press     \$19.95

*The Presidential Sports Award, PCPFS*

*Youth Sports in America, PCPFS Research Digest*

### **RESOURCES**

For more information on a particular sport, contact:

Amateur Athletic Union, call 1-407/934-7200, or write to AAU, c/o Walt Disney Resort, P.O. Box 10000, Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830-1000.

The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, call 202/690-9000, or write to PCPFS, 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Humphrey Building Room 738-H, Washington, DC 20201.

### **Pamphlets from the federal government**

The quarterly Consumer Information Center Catalog lists more than 200 helpful federal publications. For your free copy write: Consumer Information Catalog, Pueblo, CO 81009, call 1-888/8-PUEBLO or find the catalog on the Net at <http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov>.

### **Related Life Advice™ pamphlets**

See other Life Advice™ pamphlets on related topics:

Your Child's First Day at School, Choosing Child Care, Helping Your Child Understand Money and When Your Child Gets a Driver's License. To order, call 1-800-MetLife.

## **Internet Information**

For more online information about the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports check out the President's Challenge website (<http://www.indiana.edu/~preschal/>).

If you're on the Net, check us out.  
We're part of MetLife OnlineSM  
(<http://www.lifeadvice.com>).

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