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COACHING OUR KIDS TO FEWER INJURIES: YOUTH SPORTS SAFETY RESEARCH

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Background Participation in team sports builds kids' confidence, promotes teamwork, increases fitness, enhances social skills, and encourages healthy competition. Each year in the USA, 38 million children play organised sports. Yet, sports participation results in 3.5 million medical visits annually.

Purpose The aim of this study is to assess coaches', parents' and children's sports-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, with a focus on prevention of concussion, heat stroke and overuse injuries and promotion of safety gear use, pre-participation physical examinations and emergency planning.

Methods Safe Kids Worldwide partnered with Salter Mitchell to conduct youth sports safety polls with 516 young athletes, 750 parents and 752 coaches.

Results Misperceptions and uninformed behaviours are all too common. Nine in 10 parents underestimate the length of time kids should take off from playing any one sport during the year, and four in 10 underestimate the amount of fluids a typical young athlete needs per hour of play. Three in 10 kids think that good players should keep playing their sport even when they are hurt, unless a coach or adult makes them stop. Nearly half of all coaches report receiving pressure – either from parents or the kids themselves—to play an injured child during a game.

Conclusion Safe Kids Worldwide is providing leadership and working together with parents, coaches, athletes, schools, safety advocates, athletic trainers, health professionals, legislators, the media, retailers, and manufacturers to help keep our athletes healthy and injury-free through advocacy, communications, and sports safety clinics nationwide.