PREVENTING BASEBALL-RELATED INJURIES

Baseball's repeated motions make overuse injuries common, even among young players. Throwing too hard, too often or too early, without rest, puts the elbows and shoulders at risk. Though common, these injuries can be prevented.



UCL Risks Explained

- Pitchers are especially prone to injuring the ulnar collateral ligament (UCL), a thick, triangular elbow band that provides the main stability needed for throwing.
- Severe UCL damage may require reconstruction, also called Tommy John surgery.
- Tommy John surgery replaces the inner elbow ligament with a tendon from elsewhere, usually the forearm, hamstring or foot.
- Of major and minor league players having Tommy John surgery, 83 to 97 percent returned to pitching.
- Recovery after surgery spans 11 to 20 months.

Baseball Safety Practices

- Avoid focusing on just one sport.
- Strengthen your rotator cuff, scapular muscles and core.
- Warm up with a routine that gradually raises throwing distance and speed.
- Play on only one baseball team each season.
- After the season, rest from throwing for at least six weeks.
- Create a preseason throwing/long-toss plan.
- Tell your coaches and athletic trainer about any arm pain.
- Follow your league's pitch-count rules.
- Prioritize good body mechanics, control and throwing accuracy.
- Check your posture, range of motion and flexibility.

Source: NATA, Andrews Institute Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine, American Journal of Sports Medicine