

## Risk Management Tips for Coaches

Even if your club or organization offers insurance against lawsuits by injured players, no coach wants to spend needless uncompensated hours in litigation - or deal with the personal anguish if a player is seriously hurt. Here are some basic risk-management tips which will help you to avoid such problems.

1. Properly plan the activity, and teach skills in a 'reasonable' progression. Avoid teaching advanced skills too quickly, or pushing players to do things that they are not reasonably capable of doing without risk to themselves or others.
  - develop a season plan
  - observe players to determine physical capacity and skill level
  - develop written practice plans
  - adapt your plans to individual needs
  - don't deviate from your plans without good cause
  - keep records of your plans
2. Provide proper instruction so players learn to execute skills correctly. Be sure to warn of the risks to self and others if the skill is not done properly.
  - keep abreast of current instructional standards for your sport and use them
  - teach skills with customary methods of your sport and the development level of your athletes
  - make your instructions clear, complete, and consistent
3. Proper conditioning and training will also help prevent injury. Stretching is a good habit to begin at the younger age groups, and should be mandatory.
4. Provide a safe physical environment--you have a duty to notice hazards and to do what you can to reduce their risk (i.e., place a bright colored cloth over a protruding rock on a practice field).
  - note and remedy hazardous conditions through regular inspections
  - change any dangerous conditions that you can
  - give clear practice rules to avoid injury
  - ensure players wear shin guards for all practices and games
  - make players remove all jewelry
  - monitor the weather carefully and take steps to insure player safety including wearing appropriate clothing
  - do not stay outdoors when lightning is nearby, and have contingency plans for weather problems
  - do not allow children to climb on goals or hang from goals
  - make certain that portable goals are anchored
  - consider obtaining a cellular phone to make emergency calls
5. Provide adequate and proper equipment
  - make sure that equipment used on the field is safe
  - use flat or collapsible cones for field markings when possible
  - if making own equipment, double-check that design and materials are safe
  - avoid using white (interior grade) PVC pipe for equipment, as it tends to shatter
  - encourage the use of mouth guards and athletic supporters (with a hard cup)
  - teach your athletes to check all equipment carefully before using
6. Match your athletes with others of their own height/weight/ability where physical contact is likely to take place
  - match players in size, maturity, skill and experience as well as age
  - enforce eligibility rules
  - modify the practice structure when mismatches cannot easily be corrected

- be especially alert to mismatches with persons of the opposite gender, as well as with athletes recovering from injury or athletes with some disability.
7. Supervise the activity closely
    - always provide supervision as long as any player is left on the fields
    - stay at the fields until all players are picked up by their parents
    - do not permit child to leave with unknown person or with parent who does not have custody, unless permission from parent has been given
    - provide special supervision when teaching new skills and when the risk of injury increases
    - know your sport and your players sufficiently that you can anticipate potentially dangerous situations and step in to prevent them from occurring
    - use posters, notices and signs to support your rules
    - do not condone reckless or overly aggressive behavior that threatens the safety of any athlete
  
  8. Warn of inherent risks, as you are responsible to provide instructions regarding the safety of the sport. Courts have held soccer coaches liable for failure to warn of the risks of contact or collisions. Even though it may seem obvious to you, issue the warning of all risks that are apparent.
    - use written notices, releases, videos, and repeated warnings to make sure your athletes understand the risks
    - make sure that parents and players understand that soccer is a contact sport, and that sprains, strains and broken bones are common and probably unavoidable.
    - whenever you see a player doing something which is unsafe, stop and warn the entire team
    - exercise care that players don't fall onto corner flags or pointy cones
    - if you see that a player is seriously mismatched with an opponent, make quick adjustments
    - if an opponent is unduly rough, and officials fail to protect your players, remember that player safety is your ultimate responsibility, so you **MUST** take appropriate action to protect your kids
  
  9. Provide appropriate emergency assistance
    - do not move an injured athlete until certain that it is safe to do so
    - protect the injured athlete from further harm
    - provide the proper first aid
    - attempt to maintain or restore life using CPR when required
    - comfort and reassure the athlete
    - if in doubt, call 911 and get EMT evaluation

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## A Coach's First-Aid Kit

### The Basic Kit

These items are a suggestion as to what would be useful to have on hand. Certainly, additional items may be included according to your personal preference.

1. Disposable gloves (use for injuries involving blood loss)
2. Band-Aids (assortment of sizes, types, colors, etc.)
3. Adhesive tape
4. Gauze sponges (for cleaning cuts, applying pressure, etc.)
5. Scissors
6. Pack of tissues or roll of toilet paper (useful for cleanups, bloody noses, etc.)
7. Chemical ice packs or plastic bags to hold ice
8. Antiseptic (spray or ointment)
9. Sun tan lotion
10. Ace bandage (to hold ice bags onto limb)
11. Sting relief (medication or cream to relieve the itch and, possibly tweezers)
12. Medical release forms

### Other Items You May Want to Add

NOTE: the following list should be considered to be representative rather than exhaustive. On the other hand, it may not be possible or advisable for all coaches to secure all items listed.

#### Tapes

Qty	Item
2	3-inch rolls elastic bandage (see notes below)
2	4-inch rolls elastic bandage (see notes below)
8	rolls 1.5 inch tape
8	rolls pre wrap
1	1 inch roll anti-allergenic cloth tape
2	medium ankle brace
1	large triangular bandage (for a sling)
2	large heel cups
1	12" plastic sanitary shovel (see notes below)
1	tape shear
1	scissors
1	tweezers

There are some good self-cling wraps on the market which are much easier to use than the Ace bandages with the little clamps. These self-clings can be particularly useful on the field when you're trying to do many things at once.

#### Upset Stomach

Qty	Item
1 4-oz bottle	anti-diarrhea liquid for bacterial infections

1 16-oz bottle	anti-diarrhea liquid for indigestion
1 60-tab bottle	double strength chewable anti acid tablets

### Cuts & Abrasions

1 bottle	antibacterial wash
1 bottle	witch hazel and alcohol
1 can	witch hazel pads (see notes below)
1 2-oz can	benzocaine spray
20 2-inch strips	adhesive bandage
50 .75-inch strips	adhesive bandage
40 3" x 3" pads	sterile gauze pad
5 3" x 4" pads	non-stick pad
1 pkg.	moleskin for blisters (see notes below)
1 pkg.	butterfly bandages to close small cuts
1 4-oz can	anti-bacterial spray scrub
1 4-oz can	skin toughener
1 4-oz can	spray on antiseptic bandage
1 3-oz tube	abrasion ointment (zinc oxide, lanolin)
1 3-oz tube	lubricant (lanolin, zinc oxide, benzocaine)
1 small bottle	petroleum jelly
1 1.5-oz tube	antibiotic ointment
4 pairs	latex gloves

### Strains & Sprains

1 3-oz tube	balm (menthol, methyl salicylate, oleo resin capsicum)
1 3-oz tube	analgesic balm (methyl salicylate)
1 4-oz bottle	sports balm (methyl salicylate, menthol)
1 6-oz bottle	salycin
1 6-oz can	cold spray
9 large	locking freezer bag
4 small	locking freezer bag
1	air cast
8 bag	instant freeze pack

### Bruises & Fever

1 500 tablet bottle	generic 325 mg ASA
1 100 tablet bottle	500 mg acetaminophen
1 50 tablet bottle	200 mg ibuprofen

1 50 tablet bottle	220 mg Naproxen Sodium
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### Eye / Skin / Nails

1 0.5 oz bottle	polyvinyl alcohol eye drops
1 0.5 oz bottle	eye drops
1 0.5 oz bottle	contact lens wetting solution
1 4.0 oz bottle	contact lens cleaning solution
1 6 oz bottle	sun block (high SPF)
1 6 oz can	insect repellent
1 0.15 oz tube	lip balm
1	nail clipper
2	emery board
1	padded aluminum finger splint
1 0.5 oz tube	1% cortisone cream
1 4 oz can	anti-fungal spray
1 15 oz bottle	baby powder (see notes below)

### Ice

You may want to carry a small cooler with ice. You could then fill a plastic zip-lock bag and use that to ice injuries. As an alternative, you can use the chemical ice packs, but there is some risk of leakage that you should be aware of. Cold spray is very difficult to use safely if you have not worked with it and is not recommended. In almost every use, direct application of ice or a freeze pack is safer and easier to use.

### Special Medical Conditions

Depending on the medical conditions of your players you may find yourself carrying inhalers (make sure they are marked with the child's name and instructions), insulin, or other medication. Be sure to ask parents if the kids are allergic to bee stings and have them give you extra EPI pens or Benadryl for your kit. It is always preferable to have the parents in charge of these items since they know their child's condition better than you do.

In addition, you might include a cell phone with emergency phone numbers

### Notes

1. The plastic sanitary shovel is for filling ankle-breaking holes and divots and for covering sprinkler heads. Plastic helps get past airport security without questions.
2. Witch hazel pads, in an alcohol solution, are an excellent in the field tool for cleaning wounds. They are also good for quick relief of bee stings.
3. The baby powder, sprinkled on skin, on the sock, and inside the shoe, prevents blisters better than any other protection in most weather conditions.
4. Please do not use elastic bandages (e.g. "Ace Wraps") for anything more than holding ice packs on an injury, not for restricting motion. Use tape and a brace instead.
5. Moleskin should be cut to surround a blister, then the "hole" in the donut where the blister sits should be filled with petroleum jelly.
6. Rubber bands are useful for tying back loose hair
7. Large tongue depressors are useful in mud games to clean cleats

8. Unless you have a spare uniform at a game or practice it would be wise to have a way to disinfect clothing that gets soaked with blood on the spot - 1 part bleach mixed with 10 parts water (NOT ahead of time) works well.
9. Blankets, umbrellas, and tarps are also useful.

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