

# Little League Elbow Treatment

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Little League Elbow, or medial epicondylar apophysitis, is an overuse injury commonly observed in young athletes, especially those aged 8 to 15 who participate in repetitive throwing activities. This condition primarily affects the growth plate on the inner part of the elbow, which is susceptible to injury due to the stress of throwing. Common symptoms include pain on the inner elbow, swelling, and a decrease in throwing speed.

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## Signs and symptoms

- Pain on the inner elbow during or after throwing
  - Swelling and tenderness in the elbow area
  - Decreased throwing speed and accuracy
  - Pain when bending or straightening the elbow
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## Immediate treatment

- **Rest:**

Essential for recovery, involving a complete cessation of all throwing activities for 4 to 6 weeks to allow the growth plate to heal.

- If symptoms persist after periods of rest from pitching or throwing, the athlete should stop playing for the rest of the season. It may be advisable to transition to a less demanding position or even to refrain from the sport altogether until the apophysis fuses.

- **Ice therapy:**

Applying ice or a cold pack to the elbow for 10 to 20 minutes every 1 to 2 hours helps reduce pain and swelling. Always use a thin towel between the ice and skin to prevent frostbite.

- **Medication:**

Over-the-counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen or naproxen, can alleviate pain and inflammation. These should be taken with food as directed by a healthcare provider.

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## Rehabilitation and recovery

- **Physical therapy:**

Initiated once pain subsides to improve strength, flexibility, and proper throwing mechanics, with a focus on core and upper body strength.

- **Gradual return to throwing:**

With healthcare provider approval, athletes can start a structured return-to-throw program over 6 to 8 weeks, including incremental increases in the number, distance, and intensity of throws. Monitoring pitch counts to prevent overuse is crucial.

## Prevention tips

- **Pitching guidelines:**

Strict adherence to age-appropriate pitching guidelines is critical, dictating the number of pitches and necessary rest periods.

- **Cross-training:**

Encourage participation in various sports throughout the year to build overall strength and reduce repetitive strain from throwing.

- **Education:**

Teach athletes to recognize pain and to stop playing if they experience discomfort. Early intervention is key to preventing long-term damage.

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## References

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