

DO'S AND DONT'S FOR PARENTS

Talk: Talk with your child about why he or she wants to play sports. The child needs a reason and that reason needs to be reinforced by parents. Sometimes a little push from parents is all that's necessary to get your child started. It's important to emphasize the benefits of both individual and team sports and that the goal of your child's involvement with sports should be having fun.

Coach: Interview the prospective coach. What's his or her philosophy on winning and losing? Will all children on the team get to play? The coach's emphasis needs to be on your child learning the game, developing skills and having fun. Talk with the parents of team members and other athletes about the coach. Establish a line of regular communication — the coach should feel free enough to ask you about your child if he or she notices something is wrong.

Burnout: Burnout is a mental stress fracture and one of the risks of being an overachiever. It can occur from excessive training, setting too high a goal or too much enthusiasm. As a parent, set limits on practices and involvement — your child needs time off just to be a child. Always remember that a winner can come in first or last, but does his or her best and achieves goals.

Communication: Parents need to talk to their children about their sport and what's going on at practices and games. On the other hand, they shouldn't talk so much about it that it becomes overly emphasized. If you sense something is not going well, speak with your coach. The coach shouldn't be afraid to talk to you and you shouldn't be afraid to talk to the coach. There needs to be an open channel of communication between your child, you and the coach.