

Fitness for Soccer Mom, Baseball Dad, Football Family and Weekend Warriors

Have fun playing with your kids, family, and friends and get in shape!

*By Blue Chip Fit Staff
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No matter what the season in Chicago it's always time to get out and play, whether it is soccer, baseball, softball, football, basketball, walking, jogging or running.

Soccer, baseball, softball, and football are the most popular organized youth sports in Chicago, and the memories of our own glory days may still be fresh in our minds. Sharing sports with children is a great way to enjoy family time and bring fitness into the family. Watching children discover sports and improve over time is a great satisfaction, and playing with them brings spontaneous fun and laughter.

Unfortunately, some of us are not kids anymore! We're grown up and we may need to respect our current bodies and fitness levels. The days when we could run and jump all day might be gone. Perhaps we're not as flexible as we used to be, or maybe we are slightly "top heavy", or we just run out of breath faster. So we need to acknowledge this and take some precautions to avoid injuries that might prevent us from enjoying sports with the kids, family and friends.

Many sports have specific motions that are not common in our normal life and require a warm up and some stretching:

- Throwing a baseball, softball or football
- Shooting a basketball
- Bending, jumping or stretching for balls
- Kicking a soccer ball or football
- Swinging a baseball bat
- Running

The concept of warming up has changed over the years. When we were kids a warm up required first stretching the muscles and then jogging a bit to get the blood flowing. Now a warm up is viewed as performing the motion required for a sport in a slower fashion to warm up the muscles, tendons and supportive tissues. Start with simple movements of the trunk, shoulders, elbows and legs to "loosen the cobwebs." Stretching is done after a warm up or after a workout to avoid injuring cold muscles and tendons.

Following are some specific warm ups. Don't forget to warm up the kids as well, especially the throwing arm and groin:

- Wrist, elbow and shoulder rotations for throwing, followed by soft tosses of the ball.
- Slow trunk rotations to warm up the core and back. If you have a baseball bat put it behind your neck and grab both ends.
- Slow kicking motion to warm up the groin. Do both legs.
- Swing the bat in a light baseball swing. Swing from both sides to maintain muscle balance.
- Light jumping jacks or running in place to warm up calf muscles and get the blood flowing.
- Carefully bend down and touch the toes or shins a few times to warm up lower back (always be careful when bending down while warming up).
- Carefully reach high overhead to warm up your shoulders for those high throws and fly balls (always be careful when arms go overhead).

Here are some added tips to keep you injury free so you can enjoy playing with your kids, family and friends:

- Never go into long throws without some soft tosses first.
- Wear shoes with good grip. An awkward slip can easily pull a muscle. Be extra careful on wet grass.
- Watch baseball swings. Swing from both sides to maintain muscle balance.
- Watch for overuse symptoms, especially in the areas of the throwing shoulder and groin. If needed, throw underarm to lessen shoulder strain.
- If you get tired, rest or do something that doesn't require running, jumping, or throwing.
- Drink plenty of water. Just 30 minutes playing with a child is a workout! And you will spend a lot of time chasing wild throws and kicks!
- Don't forget to warm up your children, too!

Go out, play, and have fun with your kids, family and friends! It's great for all and excellent for your health. Just recognize your physical limits and you will be on the right path to staying injury free.

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Please consult your physician before starting any new exercise program.