



# LITTLE LEAGUE ELBOW

Christy Boyd, MD • Pediatric Sports Medicine Specialist

With baseball season in full swing, young pitchers need to be monitored to ensure they stay healthy throughout the season. Care of the young throwers elbow is essential to prevent injury to the growth center and long-term damage.

- **What is it?**

- Inflammation of the growth center on the inside of the elbow
- The motion of throwing causes stress on both the ligament and forearm tendons that attach at the growth center.
- Ongoing inflammation at the growth center leads to pain and weakness of the growth center

- **What are the symptoms?**

- Pain along the bony bump on the inside of the elbow
- May have swelling, redness, or stiffness in the elbow
- Symptom severity ranges from mild soreness after throwing to severe pain and swelling if the growth center pulls away from the bone

- **How is it diagnosed?**

- Exam from a physician can typically diagnosis this injury
- X-rays may be taken to assess the status of growth plate

- **How is it treated?**

- Most cases are treated with 6 weeks of complete rest from throwing
- Once pain free with daily activity and on exam, may start a progressive return to throw
- Often allowed to hit and cross train during this period of rest
- Sometimes physical therapy is used to address any areas of stiffness or weakness in the shoulder, elbow or core muscles
- Typically takes a full 12 weeks to be back to game speed throwing

- Early diagnosis and treatment can avoid any long term complications from this injury
- In severe cases where the growth plate is pulled away from the bone, surgery may be needed
  
- **How can it be prevented?**
  - Monitoring pitch counts and overall throwing volume are the main preventive measures
  - Proper pitching mechanics and avoiding throwing breaking pitches until age 14 are also essential
  - Year round throwing is also felt to make overuse injuries such as this more common. A 3 month break from pitching (not necessarily baseball) is very valuable in preventing injury
  - A young thrower should never be allowed to throw with elbow pain

**All pitchers should have rest periods between pitching appearances:**

**For pitchers age 7 to 16:**

Pitches in a day	Rest time
61 or more	4 days
41-60	3 days
21-40	2 days
1-20	1 day

**For pitchers age 17 to 18:**

Pitches in a day	Rest time
76 or more	4 days
51-75	3 days
26-50	2 days
1-25	1 day




---

**Christine R. Boyd, MD**, is a pediatric sports medicine specialist with an extensive background in both athletics and medicine. Her office is located in LifeStyleRx, ValleyCare's wellness facility in Livermore. To make an appointment, call **925-454-3090**.

---