

### Youth Baseball Considerations for the Off-Season

You cannot be part of baseball and not worry about players' throwing arms. Stories of high school pitchers undergoing surgery to repair damage from overuse injuries, or not being shown how to throw properly at a young age, are now too common.

Dr. James Andrews, known for the Tommy John Surgery, brought his message of pitcher protection to the Little League Baseball World Series several years ago, as part of the unveiling of a new national concern for baseball pitchers' arms. He was also one of the contributors to the pitch counts we have now.

Here are a few main risk factors that Dr. Andrews believes contribute to the rash of elbow injuries among young players. By paying attention to these, it could lessen the chance of a major injury on the field.

### Year-round baseball

Young pitchers are throwing hard all year and that is not a good thing. There needs to be a rest period. Baseball is a development sport and the ligaments in the elbow need rest to develop. Give pitchers at least two to three months for rest.

### Velocity

Slow it down. Thanks to numerous years of experience and a multiple of studies, Andrew mentions that there should be a line on how fast a pitcher should be throwing. Work on fundamentals, making sure players are using their legs and not just their arms to throw the ball. Telling a kid to throw hard is useless if they are only using their arm to throw.

### Fatigue

This risk factor should be the easiest to understand. It is also one of the biggest reasons for injury. This is why there is a pitch-limit. Pitchers should never pitch on back-to-back days and should never try and get through an inning when they feel any soreness or tiredness in their pitching arm.

Travel baseball (also called club baseball) also is a big cause for fatigue because coaches from separate teams do not communicate with each other. Prevent a kid from pitching several innings one night and then the next day the same kid pitching several more innings for a different coach in a different game. There is a pitch count for a reason.

### The radar gun

Don't use it. If this needs an explanation, hang up your hat and glove.