

# Q&A with DR. K

WE ASKED DR. TIMOTHY KREMCHEK, Cincinnati Reds Medical Director and Chief Orthopaedic Physician, to address your questions and concerns. So, as the old baseball saying goes, don't be "day-to-day." Get the answer from Dr. K.



**"I HAVE A SON WHO IS 8 YEARS OLD AND WANTS TO PLAY BASEBALL. IT WOULD BE HIS FIRST YEAR PLAYING THIS SPORT. IS HE TOO YOUNG TO PLAY?"**

Eight is not too young to start playing baseball. As a matter of fact, the younger you start playing, the better you become during your teen years. Studies have shown that the younger you start throwing a baseball, (mostly pitching), the sooner shoulder bones adapt and become more receptive to the forces of throwing a ball and actually change shape, which in the long haul could decrease the risk of shoulder injury later in a young career.

**"ARE THERE ANY SUGGESTIONS YOU HAVE FOR THE A LITTLE LEAGUE COACH OF NINE AND 10 YEAR OLDS? IS THERE SOMETHING I SHOULD KNOW OR READ TO BE A GOOD COACH?"**

First, if you are coaching our youngsters, I want to take my hat off to you and thank you very much. It's people like you who help our children learn and enjoy the game of baseball. I would recommend going to a facility, like Champions indoor facility in Sharonville and getting instructional lessons from the staff. At that young age, it is important to start teaching the fundamentals, throwing, catching, hitting and understanding the game. The more a child understands the game, the more interested he or she will be in getting better.

## DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS? ASK DR. K TODAY

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**"MY SON WANTS TO PLAY BASEBALL, AND HE LOVES PITCHING, BUT ALSO WANTS TO PLAY FIRST BASE WHEN HE DOES NOT PITCH. IS THIS A PROBLEM TO PLAY TWO POSITIONS?"**

The problem with little league and select leagues is that the pitchers are often the best players on the team. Pitching is not an issue, but over doing the throwing can be. Over-using the pitchers is a big problem, which leads to injury, either now or in the future. The number of pitches per game should not be more than six times their age, if they are going to play a different position, it should not be one which requires a lot of hard throwing, first base and sometimes the outfield are good alternatives, designated hitter is the best.

**"WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE BEST WORKOUT PROGRAM FOR A HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETE WHO WANTS TO IMPROVE HIS ARM AND SHOULDER STRENGTH? IS THIS A PROGRAM YOU DO YEAR-ROUND, OR ARE THERE WORKOUTS FOR THE PRE-SEASON? I HEAR SO MUCH ABOUT DEAD ARM. DOES OVER-USE CAUSE THE DEAD ARM PERIOD FOR PLAYERS?"**

Baseball has become a conditioned sport these days, which is much different than when I played years ago. Players need to stay in shape and be in shape when the season begins. This avoids muscle injury. Arm strength is best attained with an exercise program for the rotator cuff, and by strengthening the core body muscles. The best way to condition the arm is by throwing and long tossing. Long tossing develops proper throwing mechanics and arm strength.

**"I DON'T PLAY SOFTBALL EVERYDAY, BUT LOVE TO PLAY ON THE WEEKENDS. DO BASEBALL PLAYERS WORKOUT REGULARLY DURING THE SEASON, AND HOW DO THEY STAY IN SHAPE WHEN THEY DON'T PLAY EVERYDAY?"**

Most of the reason that weekend softball players are injured is that they are not in the proper shape. Freak accidents happen, but most weekend softball injuries are muscle strains and pulls, which are caused by fatigue and lack of conditioning of the muscles and ligaments. If softball season is about to start, begin to get in shape: start throwing, swinging a bat, jogging and keep the muscles stretched and strong. Sometimes the help of a personal trainer or coach can help you develop a proper program.