Letter from Orthopedics
Sports Medicine

What is little league elbow?
Little league elbow is an injury to the growth plate on the inner part of the elbow. The growth plate is the place of attachment for the group of muscles that bend the wrist and twist the forearm. This injury is also called medial epicondylar apophysitis. It is a common injury in children and teenagers who are involved in sports that required repetitive throwing such as baseball, softball and tennis.

What is the cause of little league elbow?
Little league elbow is caused by repetitive throwing motion. In the elbow the growth plate is vulnerable to injury because it is made up of growth cartilage. This cartilage is not as strong as regular bone. The repetitive throwing motion, combined with inadequate rest between throwing activities, causes the growth cartilage to weaken and develop very small cracks. This may cause growth cartilage to pull apart from the bone.

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To schedule an appointment with our orthopedic experts, call (305) 662-8366 or email orthokids@mch.com
What are the Sports Medicine Physicians up to this Month?

Dr. Craig Spurde and Dr. Swirsky have been working on a research study about Anterior Cruciate Ligament tears, the treatment option and grafts used.

Dr. Steve Swirsky just returned from Cuba where he was the team physician for the USA Judo team and Olympic Competition planning.

Dr. Annie Casta was covering the USA Judo Team in Paris, as the team physician for the Judo athletes in the Paris Grand Slam.

What are the signs and symptoms of little league elbow?

The most common symptom is pain in the inner part of the elbow. The pain may occur suddenly and sharply after one hard throw, or it may occur gradually over the course of a long season. A child may also experience swelling, redness and warmth over the inner elbow.

Treatment:

If your child’s symptoms do not improve with rest, seek advice from a physician as soon as possible. Treatment depends on the severity of the injury to the growth plate. If damage to the growth plate is minimal and caught early, it can be treated with ice, rest and compression. A period of rest includes refraining from throwing for four to six weeks to insure proper healing. Your physician will determine the exact time. In the event the damage to the growth plate is significant and/or there is separation of the growth plate from the bone, then casting may be necessary or in rare cases surgery is required.

At the time of completion of healing, a gradual progression to throwing will be started over two to three periods. The progression will be guided by your physician and/or a sports health physical therapist.

Prevention:

Follow these tips to minimize the risk of little league elbow.

1. Warm up before throwing and stretch after games and practices
2. Monitor the amount of pitches
3. If your child has elbow pain and does not exhibit an injury, have them stop throwing and see your physician as soon as possible

Locations of Sports Medicine Consultations:

Nicklaus Children’s Aventura Care Center
20295 Northeast 29 Place, Suite 300
Aventura, FL 33180

Nicklaus Children’s Hospital
Main Campus
3100 SW 62 Avenue
Miami, FL 33155

Nicklaus Children’s Hospital
Miramar Outpatient Center
12246 Miramar Parkway
at Miramar Square
Miramar, FL 33025

Nicklaus Children’s Hospital
West Kendall Outpatient Center
13400 SW 120 Street
Suites 100 & 200
Miami, FL 33186