

How do I know if my child is doing too much physical training?

This is a hard question to answer because many factors (e.g. physical training, sporting schedules, educational commitments, social pressures, and maturation) interact and influence the physical and psychological state of young athletes. When training becomes excessive, young athletes may be more at risk of an **overuse injury** or **overtraining**. Overuse injuries are caused by repetitive stress to the musculoskeletal system without enough time for recovery. Overtraining is a syndrome that causes prolonged reductions in performance and negatively affects the biological, hormonal, and neurological systems in the body.

Much like a serious overuse injury, overtraining can be equally debilitating, requiring an extensive period of time for full recovery. Some symptoms of both overuse injury or overtraining syndrome are presented below. If you think your child may be suffering from an overuse injury or overtraining, you should consult a qualified medical professional.

Potential symptoms of overuse injury	Potential symptoms of overtraining syndrome
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Gradual onset of pain✓ Pain presenting as an ache✓ Pain not a result of direct injury✓ Stiffness or aching during or after competition/training✓ Pain persisting for gradually longer periods✓ Point tenderness, especially when palpated✓ Swelling✓ Missed training session(s) due to pain/injury✓ Recurring injury problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Fatigue, disturbed sleep or insomnia✓ Depression or anxiety✓ Very fast/very slow resting heart rates✓ Hypertension✓ Irritability or agitation✓ Decreased self-confidence or motivation✓ Nausea or loss of appetite✓ Rapid weight loss✓ Heavy, sore, stiff muscles✓ Restlessness✓ Recurring illness

Current guidelines for managing workloads

- o Ensure your child engages in physical training to make them more physically robust for sport
- o Avoid your child training in a single sport for more than 8 months per year and encourage participation in a range of sports
- o Avoid youth participating in a single sport for more hours per week than their age (with weekly participation not exceeding 16 hours)

Based on:

LaPrade, R.F. et al. (2016). AOSSM Early sport specialization consensus statement. *The Orthopaedic Journal of Sports Medicine*, 28, 4 (4).