

The Disadvantages of Playing Middle School Sports

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Playing sports can help middle-schoolers get physical exercise, learn self-confidence and gain positive socialization skills with teammates, according to the Los Angeles Times. However, it's not all fun and games when it comes to organized athletics. Playing middle school sports loses its appeal when programs aren't appropriately organized or when the wrong skills are emphasized. Examine your child's middle school sports opportunities carefully to determine whether certain disadvantages are present.

Killer Competition

Although some middle school sports programs are structured to promote safe, healthy interaction between individual players and teams, not every program promotes such values. Highly competitive programs can emphasize winning over teamwork, making team players feel devalued or embarrassed if they don't win, according to the National Association of Secondary Principals. Additionally, overly competitive programs might aggressively screen potential team players, making it difficult or impossible for middle school students new to the sport to join the team and have a positive experience.

Taking One for the Team

The possibility of injury is always present in sports, and this can be particularly dangerous for a middle school student's developing body, according to the National Association of Secondary Principals. Acute trauma or repetitive stress can damage an adolescent's ligaments, tendons and muscles. Middle-schoolers might be less able to identify physical risks and may be less coordinated compared to older athletes. This creates a greater risk for physical injury, some of which can create lasting physical problems.

Watch for Systemic Flaws

Middle school sports programs might create and sustain policies that aren't helpful for an adolescent's physical or emotional development, according to the Association for Middle Level Education. Some programs might emphasize win-loss records, building a championship team, giving preferred players more game time or engaging in rivalries with other schools. Downplay these disadvantages by choosing a program that invites all players, emphasizes skill acquisition over competition and adjusts rules to be developmentally appropriate for adolescent participants.

Long-Term Love of Sports

If middle school students are subjected to intense competition, this could diminish the possibility that they'll enjoy sports as high school students or adults, according to The School Superintendents Association. Regimented practices, the pressure to win, and lack of physical readiness for the demands of the sport can all result in a young person deciding that she doesn't like participating in sports. This decision could mean that she avoids sports in the long-term, creating missed opportunities for physical activity in the future.