

What is Little League Elbow?

Little League Elbow is a common problem among young adolescent baseball players. It is a growth plate injury to the medial (inside) part of the elbow that occurs as a result of repetitive throwing motions. The growth plate is the attachment site for the ulnar collateral ligament and the group of muscles that flex the wrist and rotate the forearm.



Causes

Injury occurs when repetitive throwing motions create an overload or overstress injury to the medial elbow. During the throwing motion, a large amount of tension is placed on the medial elbow structures. With overuse, this tension causes injury to the growth plate of the medial (inside) of the elbow.

Little League Elbow can be serious if it becomes aggravated. Repeated pulling can tear ligaments and tendons away from the bone. The tearing may pull tiny bone fragments with it in the same way a plant takes soil with it when it is uprooted. The tearing can disrupt normal bone growth, resulting in deformity.

Understanding Your Elbow Problem

Symptoms

Patients report a gradually increasing onset of medial elbow pain and stiffness, particularly with throwing. Eventually, the child will experience a decrease in throwing velocity and effectiveness.

Treatment Options

Treatment for Little League Elbow is completely stopping any throwing activity. Up to 3 months of rest may be necessary. A slow progressive throwing program may be instituted when the elbow is healed.

PLAY LIKE A MAJOR LEAGUER, NOT LIKE A LITTLE LEAGUER!!

Watch for fatigue (eg, decreased ball velocity, decreased accuracy, upright trunk during pitching, dropped elbow during pitching, or increased time between pitches). If a youth pitcher complains of fatigue or looks fatigued, rest is recommended.

Make sure to have an off season. No overhead throwing of any kind for 4 months a year. No competitive baseball pitching for at least 4 months per year.

Do not pitch more than 100 innings in games in any calendar year.

Follow limits for pitch counts and days rest.

Avoid pitching on multiple teams with overlapping seasons.

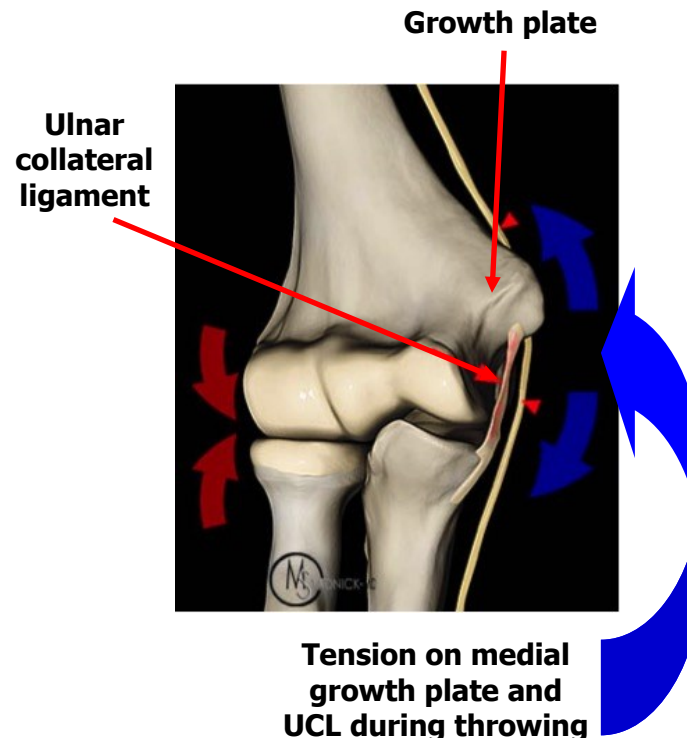
Learn good throwing mechanics as soon as possible. The first steps should be basic throwing, fastball pitching and changeup pitching.

Avoid using radar guns.

A pitcher should not also be a catcher for his team. The pitcher-catcher combination results in many throws and may increase the risk of injury.

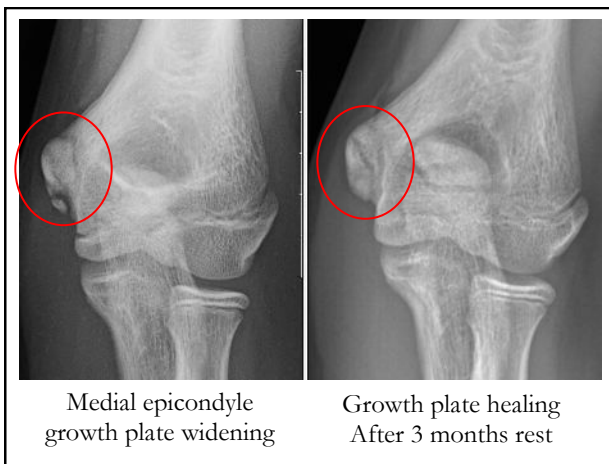
If a player complains of pain in his elbow or shoulder, discontinue pitching until evaluated by a sports medicine physician.

Inspire youth player to have fun playing baseball and other sports!



Do you have Little League Elbow?

Your doctor diagnoses Little League Elbow based on your symptoms, clinical examination, and x-rays. X-rays may be ordered by your doctor to confirm the diagnosis or to exclude other problems.



Can Little League Elbow cause permanent damage?

Usually Little League Elbow does not cause permanent damage. If caught early enough and treated properly by an orthopaedic physician, Little League Elbow will heal completely.

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