

Low-Impact Balls Help Reduce Injuries By 30%

New USA Baseball Medical/Safety Advisory Committee report suggests leagues could reduce injuries especially in lower divisions by using reduced impact balls.

While there is no way to prevent players from being hit by a ball, using a reduced impact ball would substantially reduce their risk of injury when ball impacts do occur. According to a new report, your league could reduce ball-related injuries by almost one-third in your Minor Divisions by using a reduced impact ball. The report, recently released by the USA Baseball Medical/Safety Advisory Committee, suggests that you should strongly consider adopting reduced impact balls for your Tee-Ball and other Minor League divisions that are focused on skill development.

Study Shows Injuries Largely Caused by Ball Impacts

The committee conducted two national research studies. The first study assessed the injury rate in youth baseball during the years 1987-1996. The second study assessed how effective reduced-impact balls were in preventing injuries during the 1997 to 1999 seasons.

The results of the injury rate study showed a low 1.69 injuries per 1,000 participants. Confirming the results of other studies that have shown ball impact as the number one cause of injury for all levels of Little League play, this study found ball impacts accounted for 52.6% of all injuries.

Breaking down the ball injury numbers, the batted ball accounted for 20% of all injuries, the pitched ball 19%, and the thrown ball 13%. The body parts most injured were the face, teeth, head, knee / ankle, and chest, respectively. These results show that reducing ball impact injuries can provide the most potential benefit in reducing overall injury rates and making your players safer.

Injury Data Shows Reduced Impact Balls Reduce Injuries

For the second study, the committee relied on three sources of national data from Little League: insurance injury reports, participation numbers, and a survey of equipment. The equipment survey was sent as a questionnaire to the safety officer for each of the leagues nationwide and also included telephone follow-ups for the final two years. The participation rate in the survey averaged 97%, making the study one of the most significant sources on injuries in organized youth baseball.

The study concluded that the reduced impact ball decreased ball-related injury risk by 29% for all of the reduced impact balls. The protective effect of the reduced impact balls was statistically significant for the Tee-Ball (5-8) and Minor (7-12) divisions but not in the leagues with the more skilled players.

USA Baseball Medical/Safety Recommends Low-Impact Ball

The USA Baseball Medical/Safety Advisory Committee recommends your league adopt for Tee-Ball and other Minor League divisions reduced impact balls that meet National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment standards levels 1 and 2. USA Baseball is the governing body for all baseball in the U.S.

In its conclusion, the committee stressed that switching to a reduced impact ball does not reduce the importance of teaching your players fundamental baseball skills and ball-avoidance techniques for batters. Skill enhancement remains the best and most effective way to prevent ball-related injuries.

Balls Perform Similarly

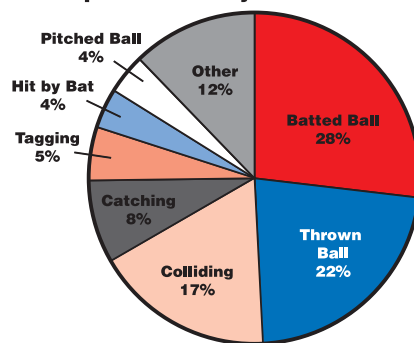
According to a study published by *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, when labels were removed from traditional and reduced impact balls, as both children and adults threw, pitched, and batted the balls, they were unable to detect a difference.

These findings are not surprising, since the reduced impact balls are designed to look and play like a traditional ball, with the same size, weight, liveliness, and surface characteristics. Neither you nor your players should be able to feel a change, and your league's performance will not be altered. You can even switch balls when tournaments begin or when teams move into an older age group with no detriment to the player's skill in using a traditional ball.

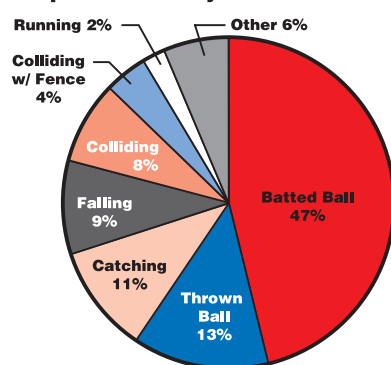
With ball-impact continuing to be the most prevalent cause of injury in Little League, it makes sense to take the advice of USA Baseball and adopt the reduced impact ball for your Tee-Ball and Minor League divisions.

The charts at left show the top causes of injuries to infielders and outfielders in Little League continue to be due to ball impacts.

Top Causes of Injuries to Infielders



Top Causes of Injuries to Outfielders



Little League®, 2004-2006