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How Many Pitches Should I Allow My Child To Throw? By Dick Mills

These pitch count and recovery times were the opinions of 28 orthopedic surgeons and coaches. To determine these, USA Baseball Medical & Safety Advisory Committee commissioned the American Sports Medicine Institute (ASMI) in Birmingham, AL. ASMI sent surveys to 85 baseball experts consisting of orthopedic surgeons and coaches.

There was discussion about the definition of rest. Should the youth pitchers be allowed to play other positions or pitch at home during the rest period. Some felt youth pitchers experience too many total throws, while others felt that children today do not throw enough.

The American Sports Medicine Institute supports the belief (as I do) that youth pitchers do not throw enough. So even though yes - they should be given rest after a pitching outing, they should still continue to play catch at home with Dad or their friends.

What's too much? Look, much of it is common sense. We as parents must educate our children in many ways. We need to tell these young pitchers (or position players too) that if his arm hurts, he must tell his parents or coach immediately. Usually a little rest will take care of it, but continuing to throw or pitch when the arm hurts is going to lead to a bigger injury and maybe a long-term one.

What else was discussed as important? The quality of a pitcher's mechanics was a very important factor in lessening the risk of injury. And also strength training was another factor.

Some observations and comments by the respondents to the survey:

- The number of pitches thrown is more important than the number of innings.
- The maximum number of pitches allowed in one outing should increase with age.
- A pitcher should be limited to two appearances per week (well spread apart)
- Compared to younger pitchers, older pitchers can throw more pitches given the same number of rest days.
- The participation in multiple leagues should be figured into rest and recovery.
- A child can start throwing a fastball at 8, a change-up at 10, and a curve ball at 14. (I say 15.)
- Improper technique is a major factor in injury.
- Conditioning of the arm and the entire body can reduce injury.
- While the number of pitches should be limited, the young pitcher should be encouraged to throw.
- When symptoms of arm discomfort or fatigue arise, longer periods of rest are recommended. (But start rehab right away using the tubing exercises.)

Once again here are the recommended pitch counts and recovery times:

SUGGESTED PITCH COUNTS

Age	Max. Pitches/game	Max. games/week
8-10	52	2
11-12	68	2
13-14	76	2
15-16	91	2
17-18	106	2



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SUGGESTED RECOVERY TIMES

Age	1 days rest	2 days rest	3 days rest	4 days rest
	Number of pitches thrown			
8-10	21	34	43	51
11-12	27	35	55	58
13-14	30	36	56	70
15-16	25	38	62	77
17-18	27	45	62	89

Recommended age for learning various pitches

Fastball: 8	Slider: 16
Change-up: 10	Forkball: 16
Curve ball: 14	Knuckleball: 15

By the way, I don't recommend you teach either a forkball or a slider to a high school pitcher. Both can be very stressful on the elbow. And why even waste time throwing a knuckleball?

I can tell you this, my son Ryan and I did a lot of throwing when he was younger. I was always cautious the day after he pitched and I never warmed him up in the backyard before a game as many dads do.

But we played catch all the time. Kids just don't do that much anymore. Whenever I drive by a baseball field, rarely do I see kids playing baseball or even a dad throwing batting practice to his boy.

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