



National Athletic Trainers' Association Official Statement in Support of Sport Specialization Recommendations for Adolescent and Young Athletes October 2019

The National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) acknowledges sport specialization as an evolving health issue in adolescent and young athletes. Current evidence supports an association with sport specialization and overuse injury in athletes. While current literature has paid more attention to the physical and mental aspect of sport specialization, the psychosocial implications of young athletes continue to be a concern.

The NATA supports the following recommendations as they relate to the health and well-being of adolescent and young athletes.

1. **Delay Specializing in a Single Sport as Long as Possible**: Sport specialization is often described as participating and/or training for a single sport year-round. Adolescent and young athletes should strive to participate, or sample, a variety of sports. This recommendation supports general physical fitness, athleticism and reduces injury risk in athletes.
2. **One Team at a Time**: Adolescent and young athletes should participate in one organized sport per season. Many adolescent and young athletes participate or train year-round in a single sport, while competing in other organized sports simultaneously. Total volume of organized sport participation per season is an important risk factor for injury.
3. **Less Than Eight Months Per Year**: Adolescent and young athletes should not play a single sport more than eight months per year.
4. **No More Hours/Week Than Age in Years**: Adolescent and young athletes should not participate in organized sport and/or activity more hours per week than their age (i.e., a 12-year-old athlete should not participate in more than 12 hours per week of organized sport).
5. **Two Days of Rest Per Week**: Adolescent and young athletes should have a minimum of two days off per week from organized training and competition. Athletes should not participate in other organized team sports, competitions and/or training on rest and recovery days.
6. **Rest and Recovery Time from Organized Sport Participation**: Adolescent and young athletes should spend time away from organized sport and/or activity at the end of each competitive season. This allows for both physical and mental recovery, promotes health and well-being and minimizes injury risk and burnout/dropout.

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