

Dear Parent of Youth Thrower:

Youth baseball throwing injuries to the shoulder and elbow have been considered by experts in the field as an “epidemic” since 2004. Youth throwers most at risk for these types of injuries encompass athletes in both baseball and softball, in the age ranges of nine (when overhand pitching starts), through eighteen (when skeletal maturity occurs). These throwing injuries occur mostly in pitchers and catchers, but are now being seen in players of all positions. They are cumulative over time, and are caused by repetitive overhead throwing. The harder an athlete throws, and the more he or she throws, the more likely serious injury is to occur. These injuries can end the season, year or career of a young athlete, and often require surgery. With simple and completely painless range-of-movement measurements, the likelihood of shoulder throwing injuries can be greatly reduced, and possibly eliminated.

Through my SafeThrow program, I offer free screening examinations of the shoulders of youth throwers. This screening examination takes approximately one minute per athlete. Youth throwers who have no known problems with their shoulder are often discovered during this screening examination to have significant tightness in the ligaments of the shoulder. If after this screening examination any abnormalities of the throwing arm are suspected, a simple stretch and exercise program will be provided. With these stretches and exercises, which are simple to do at home, substantial improvement in shoulder function occurs in time periods as short as three to four weeks. Thus, seasons are salvaged for throwers who might have missed that season due to injury.

As a surgeon specializing in the shoulder and elbow, I am very interested in injury prevention and treatment of the throwing athlete, especially youth throwers. The last thing any of us wants is a high-level thrower who is forced to sit out a season or year due to injury that could have been prevented. In my experience, these injuries almost always occur during the formative years of a youth thrower’s career, and happen at the worst possible time – often while being scouted for college scholarships! My staff and I have done this SafeThrow screening for over a thousand youth throwers, and we are convinced that this is improving their long-term throwing careers.

SafeThrow will be screening athletes year-round through your child’s league or baseball organization, mostly during the Spring baseball season. You may contact me at the email address below to find out when your child could attend a screening session, as large groups of players are usually scheduled at one time. With players under 18, parental consent forms are required and available for download. There is never any charge for this service. Educational materials and giveaways are provided by Greater Houston Orthopedic Specialists, L.L.P.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Charles Metzger, M.D.**

Board Certified by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgery  
Certificate of Added Qualification in Hand Surgery  
Active Member of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons  
Active Member of the American Society for Surgery of the Hand  
Active Member of the American Medical Association

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Disclaimer: As no medical screening program can ever guarantee total prevention of injury, injury is still possible. This screening will make throwing injuries much less likely, but cannot offer absolute prevention. Any publications that materialize from the data collected will not reference any individual participant.