

Inherent risks of injuries often accompany physical activities, and baseball is not an exception. This is even more true for pitchers who use repeated motions and the same muscles throughout games. Using the wrong technique or not properly caring for the muscles and joints can lead to detrimental results on the pitching arm. In order to properly take care of your pitching arm, ensure you engage in the following activities and actions:

**Conditioning:** Athletes condition their bodies for sports in different ways, depending on the muscles used in their games. Since pitchers mostly use the muscles in their arms, they may develop a plan that allows them not to throw every day but practice enough to build a tolerance to throwing a high amount. Conditioning exercises that a pitcher may do include weightlifting, light tossing, and long tossing.

**Stretch and Warm-Up the Pitching Arm:** Stretching and warming up are crucial to avoiding sprains or injuries. Pitchers may engage in Jobe Shoulder Exercises to strengthen their shoulders and rotator cuffs and other exercises involving the use of resistance bands. Exercises involving resistance bands help strengthen and build arm muscles by forcing them to move in the opposite direction to how they would typically move during a pitch.

**Weight Training:** With weight training, pitchers should focus on areas such as the shoulder, upper and lower arms, elbow, and wrist of the pitching arm. Weight training exercises that target most of these body parts, if not all, include pushups, basketball cuff dribble, toss backs, and medicine ball slams. A pitcher may also consider enlisting the help of a personal trainer to help develop a personalized weight training regimen.

**Practice Proper Pitching Mechanics:** Pitching mechanics are vital to successful throws. The steps in proper pitching mechanics are:

- Starting stance
- Wind up
- Leg lift
- Maximum knee height
- Stride
- Stride foot contact
- Arm cocking
- Maximum external rotation
- Arm acceleration
- Release
- Arm deceleration
- Maximum internal rotation
- Follow-through

Consistency in pitching mechanics can ensure that the pitching arm does not undergo too much strain and help the muscles retain the memory required for proper throwing.

**Limit Pitch Counts:** Pitch count is a hotly debated topic in baseball as it can be detrimental to a pitcher if not properly controlled. It is good to adhere to a specific limit and not attempt to keep going even if you feel you can in order to avoid unnecessary strain on your arm. According to Major League Baseball, pitchers aged 19-22 are advised to set a maximum of 120 pitches per

day. After a 2-day rest, the pitcher may throw no more than 60 pitches, while up to 105 pitches may be thrown after a 4-day rest.

**Have a recovery schedule:** Rest and recovery is arguably the most critical part of maintaining a healthy pitching arm. Ideally, recovery should begin almost immediately after pitching has finished for the day. Young pitchers are advised against icing their shoulders or elbows after pitching. Instead, they should engage in light jogging, massaging sore spots such as the shoulder, bicep, forearm, stretching, refueling and rehydration, and showering. The general guideline followed by most major league pitchers are:

- Day 1: Pitch
- Day 2: Rest and light stretching
- Day 3: Play catch and warm up with stretching
- Day 4: Long toss and light weightlifting
- Day 5: Bullpen session with a maximum of 50 pitches