

Athlete Toolkit

A step-by-step game plan for athletes and parents: sleep, fuel, recovery, injury prevention, and safety, the MK Way.

Prepared by MK Wellness · Cypress, TX · mkwellness.care · Updated October 2026



Take a breath. You don't have to do this all at once. Pick where you are below, and start with one step today.

A NOTE FROM DANI

Training breaks the body down. Recovery is where it gets stronger.

Young athletes today train harder, earlier, and more often than ever, and most of what decides how they feel and perform happens off the field: sleep, food, hydration, rest, and how they handle pressure. This toolkit is the game plan we share with our athletes and their parents, built on sports medicine guidance, the experts we trust, and what we see every week in our recovery studio.

It works for adult athletes too. Start with where you are in your season, take one step at a time, and bring your questions to your coach, athletic trainer, or doctor.

How to use this toolkit

1. **Tell us where you are** (just below) to see your first six steps.
2. **Tick each box as you go.** Your checkmarks save on this phone or computer, so you can come back anytime.
3. **Bring your questions** to appointments: print them, or email them to yourself. Talk through anything new with your coach, athletic trainer, or doctor before you start it.

Where to start

In season

1. Aim for 8 to 10 hours a night (step 2)
2. Build every plate the same way (step 3)
3. Drink water with minerals (step 4)
4. Plan recovery after games (step 5)
5. Take 1 to 2 days off each week (step 5)
6. Know the signs (step 7)

Off season

1. Take real breaks from your main sport during the year (step 5)
2. Do a neuromuscular warm-up before every practice (step 6)
3. Build strength year-round (step 6)
4. Get a sports physical every year (step 1)
5. Ask for an airway evaluation before braces or tonsil removal (step 2)
6. Play more than one sport (step 6)

Coming back from an injury

1. Get it checked (step 10)
2. Protect it at first, then move gently (step 10)
3. Follow a step-by-step return to play (step 10)
4. Feed the healing (step 10)
5. Ask your doctor whether recovery therapies fit, like PEMF, red light, compression, or mild hyperbaric oxygen, and then book a session with us. (step 10)
6. Stay part of the team when you're hurt (step 8)

What the research labels mean

STRONG National guidelines recommend it, based on many trials.

PROMISING Positive randomized or controlled human trials; still being confirmed.

EMERGING Early human data: small studies, case series, clinic data.

EXPERIMENTAL Lab and animal studies plus personal stories; human trials still needed.

The 13 steps

1

Set up the basics

A few things to have in place before the season starts.

- ☐ **Get a sports physical every year**, and tell the doctor about any past concussions, injuries, fainting, or chest pain during exercise.
- ☐ **Meet your athletic trainer** and save their number. Athletic trainers are licensed to evaluate injuries and guide a safe return to play.
- ☐ **Ask the coach:** "What's our emergency plan? Is there an AED and a cold-water tub at practices and games?"
[QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Keep medical info handy:** allergies, medicines, inhalers, and emergency contacts, in your phone and with the team.
- ☐ **Wear a mouthguard** for contact sports, and gear that fits. Replace worn-out shoes before they cause problems.
- ☐ **Map the season:** games, tournaments, travel, and school deadlines. Plan lighter weeks before you need them.

Questions for the coach

- ☐ "How many practices and games are there each week, and how many full rest days?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ "Do you use an injury-prevention warm-up, like FIFA 11+, before practice?" [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ "Who checks injuries at practices and games, and how do you decide when an athlete can return?"
[QUESTION TO ASK](#)

2

Sleep and breathe like a pro

Sleep is the most powerful recovery tool there is, and it's free.

Teens need 8 to 10 hours of sleep a night (American Academy of Sleep Medicine). In a study of middle and high school athletes, those who slept less than 8 hours were 1.7 times more likely to be injured (Journal of Pediatric Orthopaedics, 2014).

Sleep

- ☐ **Aim for 8 to 10 hours a night** for teens, and 7 to 9 for adults, on a steady schedule, even on weekends.
- ☐ **Screens off an hour before bed**, and phones charge outside the bedroom.
- ☐ **Make the bedroom dark, cool, and quiet.**
- ☐ **Get morning sunlight** outside, without sunglasses, to set your body clock.
- ☐ **No caffeine late in the day**, and no energy drinks for kids and teens (American Academy of Pediatrics).
- ☐ **Short early-afternoon naps** can help on heavy training days.

Breathing, airway, and teeth

- ☐ **Ask for an airway evaluation before braces or tonsil removal.** An airway-focused dentist or ENT can check whether a narrow airway is affecting sleep and breathing. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Practice nasal breathing** during easy training and at night. Mouth breathing and snoring are worth getting checked. Read breathing as a performance tool.
- ☐ **Keep up dental checkups**, and see a biological dentist for a comprehensive exam if your athlete has an ongoing health condition.

3

Fuel with real food

Protein, vegetables, and fruit, the MK Way.

Standard sports nutrition runs on pasta, granola bars, and neon sports drinks. The MK Way is simpler: build every meal around protein, vegetables, and fruit, and add whole-food carbs for energy. Read athlete nutrition, the MK Way.

- ☐ **Build every plate the same way:** protein first (eggs, meat, fish, Greek yogurt), then vegetables, then fruit.
- ☐ **Add whole-food carbs on training days:** sweet potatoes, rice, potatoes, and fruit. Fruit is athlete energy. Pasta works as a small side if it agrees with you.
- ☐ **Eat a real meal two to three hours before games**, and a small snack like fruit closer to game time.
- ☐ **Refuel after games:** protein plus carbs, like chicken and rice or eggs and fruit. Read the recovery window.
- ☐ **Skip the extras:** seed oils, artificial dyes, sugary sports drinks, and ultra-processed snacks.
- ☐ **Choose organic and pasture-raised when you can**, and wash produce well.
- ☐ **Eat enough.** Not eating enough for your training can affect hormones, bones, and performance (called RED-S). For girls, missed periods are a warning sign to see a doctor.

- ☐ **Ask your doctor about checking iron and vitamin D**, especially for girls and indoor athletes. Low levels can drain energy. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
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4

Hydrate for Texas heat

Water plus minerals, before you feel thirsty.

- ☐ **Drink water with minerals:** on hot or long training days, add an electrolyte mix without dyes or added sugar.
 - ☐ **Check your color:** pale yellow urine means you're on track; dark means drink more.
 - ☐ **Weigh in before and after practice** on hot days, and drink to replace what you lost.
 - ☐ **Ease into the heat.** The first 14 days of preseason practice are when bodies adapt, so build up gradually (NATA).
 - ☐ **Know the emergency signs of heat stroke:** confusion, collapse, or acting strange in the heat. Call 911 and cool first, ideally in cold water, then transport (NFHS).
 - ☐ **Dani's favorite:** DrinkHRW molecular hydrogen tablets in water, part of her daily ritual. See them in the shop.
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5

Recover on purpose

Rest days and smart recovery are where the body rebuilds.

- ☐ **Take 1 to 2 days off each week** from organized sports (American Academy of Pediatrics).
 - ☐ **Take real breaks from your main sport during the year**, a month or more at a time, to prevent overuse injuries and burnout (American Academy of Pediatrics).
 - ☐ **Plan recovery after games:** gentle movement, compression, protein, water, and sleep. Read get more from recovery sessions.
 - ☐ **Soak sore muscles:** a bowl soak for one sore spot, or a hot full bath for whole-body soreness.
 - ☐ **Downshift after games** with a few minutes of slow nasal breathing or the physiological sigh.
 - ☐ **Try LifeWave patches** on recovery days. See the X39 + X49 Athlete Protocol.
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6

Prevent injuries

Many sports injuries can be prevented with smart training.

- ☐ **Do a neuromuscular warm-up before every practice.** Programs like FIFA 11+ cut overall soccer injuries by 39% in randomized trials (British Journal of Sports Medicine, 2017). Ask your coach which one fits your sport.
STRONG
- ☐ **Build strength year-round,** including hips, core, and hamstrings, with a coach or trainer who teaches good form.
- ☐ **Girls: ask about ACL prevention training.** Female athletes tear their ACL more often, and prevention programs lower the risk. **QUESTION TO ASK**
- ☐ **Play more than one sport** while you're young. Waiting until the late teens to focus on one sport lowers overuse injuries and burnout (American Academy of Pediatrics).
- ☐ **Baseball and softball players:** follow pitch counts and rest days from Pitch Smart.
- ☐ **Don't play through pain that changes how you move.** Ask: "Can you check this before it gets worse?"
QUESTION TO ASK

7

Be concussion smart

When in doubt, sit it out.

Texas law protects young athletes

Under Natasha's Law, Texas schools must remove a player from practice or a game if a concussion is suspected, and the player can't return that day. Return to play requires a doctor's written clearance and the school's step-by-step protocol (Texas HB 2038).

- ☐ **Know the signs:** headache, dizziness, nausea, blurry vision, confusion, trouble remembering, feeling "foggy," or acting different after a hit.
- ☐ **When in doubt, sit it out.** Tell a coach or trainer right away, even if you feel okay.
- ☐ **Call 911 or go to the ER** for a worsening headache, repeated vomiting, a seizure, weakness, slurred speech, or one pupil larger than the other.
- ☐ **Return to learn before return to play.** Follow the school's protocol step by step, with a doctor's written clearance.
- ☐ **Take the free CDC HEADS UP training** for parents and athletes at cdc.gov/heads-up, and read our concussion awareness guide.

8

Mind, pressure, and joy

Mental health is part of performance.

- ☐ **Parents: check in often.** "How are you really doing?" School, pressure, and social media add up.
- ☐ **Keep it fun.** Athletes who love their sport stay with it longer.
- ☐ **Watch for burnout:** dreading practice, constant tiredness, falling grades, or one injury after another. A break can be the best training.
- ☐ **Build a pre-game routine:** a few slow breaths, a cue word, and a short picture of the play going right.
- ☐ **Stay part of the team when you're hurt.** Injuries can feel lonely; keep showing up when you can.
- ☐ **If an athlete is struggling, get help early** from a counselor, coach, or doctor. In a crisis, call or text 988.
- ☐ **Celebrate effort, character, and growth,** not just the scoreboard.

9

Supplements and safety

Food first, and only third-party tested products.

- ☐ **Food first.** Most young athletes need better meals and more sleep before any supplement.
- ☐ **Choose third-party tested products** with the NSF Certified for Sport or Informed Sport seal, which screen for banned substances. We carry Thorne, which offers many NSF Certified for Sport products.
- ☐ **No energy drinks for kids and teens.** The American Academy of Pediatrics says they have no place in a young athlete's diet.
- ☐ **Ask your doctor before any supplement,** especially for athletes under 18. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Competing at a high level?** Check your league's banned-substance rules before taking anything.

10

When an injury happens

Heal well, then come back safely.

The old advice was RICE: rest, ice, compression, and elevation. The doctor who coined it later walked it back, and today's approach protects the injury at first, then brings in gentle movement and healthy blood flow. Read why we've moved past RICE.

- ☐ **Get it checked** by your athletic trainer or doctor, especially swelling, a pop, or pain that changes how you move.

- ☐ **Protect it at first, then move gently** as your doctor or physical therapist allows.
- ☐ **Follow a step-by-step return to play**, not a calendar date. Come back when you have full motion, strength, and confidence.
- ☐ **Ask:** "What is my step-by-step plan to return, and what should I be able to do before each step?"
[QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Feed the healing:** protein at every meal, plenty of vegetables and fruit, water, and extra sleep.
- ☐ **Ask your doctor whether recovery therapies fit**, like PEMF, red light, compression, or mild hyperbaric oxygen, and then book a session with us. [QUESTION TO ASK](#)
- ☐ **Adults exploring regenerative care for an injury:** we refer our clients to Dr. Tina Hills, D.O., and her practice, PHMX, in Katy. Ask us to connect you.

11 Your MK athlete protocol

Recovery built around the game calendar.

MK Wellness is a recovery studio with 26 recovery and biohacking therapies. Our Elite Athlete Protocol lays out season-by-season and game-week recovery, and the Student Recovery membership offers unlimited recovery visits for athletes 18 and under. Adult athletes can see every plan on Pricing.

When	What we recommend
The day before a game	Fuller recovery sessions to arrive fresh: infrared sauna, red light, compression boots, and spinal thermal massage
Right before a game	Short, activating sessions: the vibration plate, and the Sound Lounge for focus
After a game	Compression, cold, and light-based recovery
Coming back from an injury	PEMF, red light, and mild hyperbaric oxygen, with your doctor's okay

- ☐ **Book a free tour or a first visit**, and we'll build your athlete's protocol together. Call or text (346) 805-8928.
- ☐ **Print the Elite Athlete Protocol** and keep it with your gear.
- ☐ **See Dani's favorites for athletes** in the shop.

Free help and resources

Trusted places for safety, prevention, and support.

Who	Helps with	Contact
CDC HEADS UP	Free concussion training for parents, coaches, and athletes	cdc.gov/heads-up
Stop Sports Injuries	Injury prevention tips by sport, from sports medicine surgeons	stopsportsinjuries.org
Pitch Smart	Pitch counts and rest days for baseball and softball	mlb.com/pitch-smart
Korey Stringer Institute	Heat safety and preventing sudden death in sport	ksi.uconn.edu
NSF Certified for Sport	Looking up third-party tested supplements	nsfsport.com
UIL Texas	Texas school athletics rules, including concussion and heat safety	uiltexas.org
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	Free, confidential support, any time	Call or text 988

Voices we learn from

Experts whose work shapes how we coach recovery.

Dr. Stacy Sims, PhD

Exercise physiologist and nutrition scientist

Her work on how female athletes train, fuel, and recover differently ("women are not small men") is a must for girls and women in sport. Author of *ROAR*.

Dr. Kelly Starrett, DPT

Physical therapist

Co-founder of The Ready State and co-author of *Built to Move*, with simple daily habits for mobility, sleep, and resilience.

Dr. Andy Galpin, PhD

Exercise physiologist

Known for his research on muscle and his practical frameworks for training and recovery. Co-author of *Unplugged*.

Dr. Peter Attia, MD

Physician and longevity expert

Makes the case for strength, stability, and fitness as the foundation of a long, healthy life. Author of *Outlive*.

James Nestor

Journalist

His bestseller *Breath* explores nasal breathing and how the way we breathe affects sleep, energy, and performance.

Books to explore

- *ROAR* by Dr. Stacy Sims
- *Built to Move* by Dr. Kelly Starrett and Juliet Starrett
- *Outlive* by Dr. Peter Attia
- *Breath* by James Nestor
- *Unplugged* by Dr. Andy Galpin, Brian Mackenzie, and Phil White

We're in your corner.

Questions about this toolkit, or want help building your MK protocol? Call or text us. We're happy to talk it through.

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Important. MK Wellness provides wellness services for recovery, comfort, and performance support. We do not diagnose or treat injuries, concussions, or any medical condition. This toolkit is educational and does not replace advice from your doctor, athletic trainer, or coach. It deliberately includes no supplement doses or protocols. Mention of a person, book, or program is not an endorsement of every claim they make. Resource details can change; confirm with each program. MK Wellness and PHMX are two separate, independent businesses.