

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

An Athlete's Pledge

DIRECTIONS: After reading the article "Playing Through the Pain" on pages 12-16, think about how to stay safe on the field. Read the athlete's pledge on page 15 (and below). If you agree to abide by the pledge and take care of your body, sign the pledge below.

Don't play through the pain. These promises will help you stay in the game—long-term.

I will ... **SIDELINE MYSELF.** Never train or play with pain, period. And if you experience a major jolt to the head or blow to the body, stop long enough to search for signs of swelling or to evaluate the pain without all that on-field adrenaline racing through your body.

I will ... **LET MY BODY RECOVER.** Certain injuries (such as sprains and stress fractures) can keep you out of the game for days, weeks, or months. And although it's definitely hard to sit out, you need to be mature enough to be honest with yourself—and weigh your love of competing against the very real long-term risks of returning to your sport too soon.

I will ... **EMBRACE THE OFF-SEASON.** With year-round leagues and fierce competition for college athletic scholarships, there's a lot of pressure to "specialize" in a single sport these days. But when your muscles, bones, and tendons are still developing, going through the same types of motions without a break—whether that's running cross-country trails or pitching a softball—can lead to serious over-use injuries that may sideline you for good. "Playing a different sport in the off-season diversifies what your body is exposed to, and it helps you become a better and more resilient athlete," says Michael Bergeron, executive director of the National Youth Sports Health & Safety Institute.

Name: _____

Signature: _____