

New study finds major league pitchers 34 percent more likely to be injured than fielders

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Watch out if you are a Major League Baseball (MLB) pitcher prior to the All-Star break. Pitchers are 34 percent more likely to be injured than fielders, according to a study presented today at the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's (AOSSM) Annual Meeting. The study looked into the epidemiology of MLB players' injuries from 2002 - 2008. It also found that 77 percent of all injuries to pitchers happen before the All-Star Game.

"Even though baseball is a passion of many people and our national pastime, there is very little information about the epidemiology, characteristics or distribution of injuries in Major League Baseball," said Maj., Matthew Posner, MD, [orthopaedic surgeon](#) at the William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso, Texas. "This study attempts to evaluate Major League injuries over the period of six years."

The study authors analyzed [Major League Baseball](#) disabled list data from a single internet website for the years 2002 - 2008. Then they calculated the frequency and proportional distribution of injuries by anatomic region, league, time of season and position. The study found that upper extremity injuries accounted for 51.4 percent of all injuries. Lower extremity injuries accounted for 30.6 percent, while back injuries accounted for 7.4 percent and core muscle injuries accounted for 4.3 percent.

Pitchers had a 34 percent higher [injury](#) rate than fielders prior to the All-Star Game, according to the study. Not surprisingly, pitchers experienced 67 percent of the injuries to the upper extremity compared to fielders while fielders also had a greater proportion of the lower extremity injuries and injuries to other anatomic regions, according to the study.

The study also noted that pitchers also spent a greater proportion of days on the disability list (62.4 percent) when compared to fielders (37.6 percent). But both pitchers and fielders spent significantly more days on the disabled list for upper extremity injuries than for lower extremity injuries.

National League or American League? The study found that the distribution of injuries by anatomic region was nearly identical between players in the National League and the American League when all players (pitchers and fielders) were considered. National League players injured their upper extremities 51.7 percent of the time, lower extremities 30.7 percent and other anatomic regions 17.7 percent. American League players injured their upper extremities 51.1 percent of the time, lower extremities 30.5 percent and other anatomic regions 18.4 percent, according to the study.

As for the timing of the injuries, 74.4 percent of all MLB players' injuries occurred before the All-Star break. Pitchers sustained 76.5 percent and fielders sustained 71.7 percent of their total respective injuries prior to the All-Star game. Seventy-nine percent of all shoulder and elbow injuries happened to [pitchers](#) before the All-Star game and 74.8 percent of all hamstring, quadriceps, groin and core injuries to fielders happened before the All-Star game.

Provided by American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine

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