

# Ice hockey injury prevention



Ice hockey has a high injury rate. Body checking accounts for 86% of injuries during games. Head and neck injuries account for 23% of the total injuries. Many injuries can be prevented.

## What are common ice hockey injuries?

- Head and neck injuries
- Concussions
- Face injuries
- Fractures of arms and legs or growth plates (avulsions)
- Knee and ankle sprains
- Muscle strains in legs and back
- Cuts (lacerations)
- Bruises

## How can I prevent icy hockey injuries?

- Play by the rules and promote good sportsmanship.
- Teach players to keep his or her head up during falls. Do not lower the head during collisions.
- Have a good warm-up program. It will prepare your body for hockey. It should be a total body program. Warm-ups should use moving stretches (dynamic stretches) and include arm, leg and back muscles.
- Have a good strengthening program for upper and lower body muscles. Good form in strength training will help prevent overuse injuries.
- Do drills that challenge your balance and body control.
- Include jumping and agility drills. These work on burst-like movements (plyometrics).
- Wear properly fitted safety gear, including:
  - Helmet with face mask (replace the helmet if it takes a heavy blow)
  - Mouth guard
  - Shoulder, elbow, knee and groin pads
  - Skates that do not cause blisters
  - Stick should be 3 inches below chin while wearing skates
- Drink plenty of water 30 minutes before games or practices. Drink both water and sports drinks during games and practices. Only drink sports drinks if practice or games are more than 90 minutes.

## What can I do before the season starts?

Hockey athletes need a pre-season plan to help get their bodies ready for play. Start the program at least 4-6 weeks before the season starts. Pre-season plans include:

- Flexibility
- Strength
- Balance and coordination
- Endurance
- Agility
- Special hockey skills

## How should I warm up?

It is important to warm up. A basic warm-up should take 15 to 25 minutes.

- Start with 5 minutes of light aerobic activity. This raises the heart rate and warms up muscles.
- Do 10 minutes of dynamic stretches. Stretch your arms, legs and back.
- Finish with 5 minutes of full speed skating, passing and shooting drills.
- At the end of a practice or round:
  - Spend time stretching your whole body.
  - Hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds.
  - Stretch for 10 to 15 minutes.

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