



### ***Putting Heads Together on our National Child and Youth Injury Problem – ThinkFirst Canada on Sports and Recreation Safety***

March 16, 2011, Toronto - ThinkFirst Canada / Pensez d'Abord Canada believes it is a child's right to engage in active healthy and safe play which is why the charity is a strong advocate for health promotion and head protection in sports and recreation. ThinkFirst Canada is delighted with the Federal Government dedication of resources for injury prevention for Canadian children and youth. Injury is the leading cause of death for young Canadians. Traumatic brain and spinal cord incidents are preventable injuries that can lead to death and disability.

"Canadian children and youth should be afforded healthy and safe participation in sports and recreation in order to reach their full potential," comments Rebecca Nesdale-Tucker, Executive Director of ThinkFirst Canada. "A severe brain injury can permanently change the way a child can play, learn and interact with others. This is devastating to the victim and their families and imposes a large toll on society in terms of long term care. ThinkFirst wants to see children and youth participating fully and safely in all the healthy activities of childhood, recognizing that many popular sports and recreation pastimes like skiing and snowboarding, hockey, football, ice skating, bicycling, soccer and water-sports carry a degree of risk."

In fact, head injuries are the most severe injuries among children and young people who participate in sport and recreational activities. Investments in injury prevention, capacity-building, coordination, public awareness and surveillance are among the recommended strategic objectives to identify and reduce preventable injury in sports and recreation across Canada.

As a national charitable organization ThinkFirst Canada and its supporters have been providing information on being healthy active and safe such as free education programs in schools – such as TD ThinkFirst for Kids and Brain Day as well as sports and recreation programming including concussion information. "ThinkFirst Canada looks forward to working closely with the Government of Canada and our national partners for the safety of Canada's kids," says Dr. Charles Tator, Founder of ThinkFirst Canada. "In our experience with sports injuries over the past 20 years, we have learned that when people put their heads together to tackle a problem, great things can happen. You don't have to look farther than the reduction that has been achieved in broken necks in hockey." During this International Brain Awareness Week, Dr. Tator reminds us to visit [thinkfirst.ca](http://thinkfirst.ca) for sports and recreation and concussion information: "Prevention is the only cure."

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International Brain Awareness Week**

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**Brain Injury Fact Sheet**  
**thinkfirst.ca**

Damage to the brain and spinal cord can rarely be repaired. Life after a brain or spinal cord injury is never the same

Injury is the leading killer of Canadian children and youth. 50 per cent of all deaths from injury are from brain injuries

Thirty per cent of all traumatic brain injuries are sustained by children and youth, many of them while participating in sports and recreational activities

Each severe brain injury costs our medical and social systems millions of dollars.

Although catastrophic brain injuries in sports and recreation can affect anyone, boys/men are affected four times as frequently as girls/women

Concussions are common brain injuries. It is important that these concussion injuries are diagnosed and managed to avoid long-term symptoms or cognitive deficits.

## The Good News:

Researchers estimate that 90 per cent of all injuries are predictable and preventable

Bike helmets can prevent up to 88 per cent of brain injuries when used properly

Skiers and snowboarders who wear helmets reduce their risk for head injuries by 60 per cent

It is estimated that each dollar invested in a helmet saves \$30 in social costs

There is reason to be concerned about sport-related concussions, but the good news is that with proper management, up to 90% of concussions last no longer than a few weeks, and do not result in long-term symptoms or cognitive deficits.

## What You Can Do

Remember: most crashes aren't accidents, but predictable, preventable events. Change the way you speak about these events to change social perception

Encourage kids to be active, but ensure they get proper training, wear the gear, and are able to effectively navigate risks

Be a role model: as parents, coaches and educators it is important to model safe, responsible behaviours like wearing a properly fitted helmet during appropriate activities, and buckling up in the car

Visit [thinkfirst.ca](http://thinkfirst.ca) before you play.

## About ThinkFirst Canada

**ThinkFirst** is a national charitable organization dedicated to the prevention of brain and spinal cord injuries. Celebrating over eighteen years in operation, ThinkFirst has been heightening public awareness through education since its inception in 1992, when it was founded by renowned neurosurgeon Dr. Charles Tator and concerned colleagues.

Headquartered in Toronto, there are nineteen local **Chapters** in every province across the country spreading the ThinkFirst injury prevention message. These chapters are managed by dedicated volunteers, some of whom are medical professionals, teachers, coaches, and injury survivors. By

implementing ThinkFirst programs in their local communities, such as **ThinkFirst Brain Day** and **TD ThinkFirst for Kids** program, our volunteers are raising awareness of the simple and effective ways to avoid devastating brain and spinal cord injuries. Without the generous support of our many volunteers, ThinkFirst's goals could not be accomplished.

ThinkFirst teaches school-aged children and youth, sports teams, and community volunteers, to safely participate in the activities they enjoy. Our message is promoted through our advocating for healthy public policy, as well as our participation in a number of coalitions that raise injury prevention awareness in communities across the country. Our information is always up-to-date as we partner in research on the causes of injury and the effectiveness of our injury prevention programs, to ensure the information we provide is both timely and relevant.

There are numerous opportunities for individuals to get involved and promote the ThinkFirst mission. Whether by donating to our organization, volunteering time at a local chapter, or simply passing along materials available on the site to others, every effort to the cause is one step closer to diminishing the number of traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries in Canada.