

THINKFIRST CANADA'S ICE HOCKEY INJURY PREVENTION TIPS

There's no arguing that hockey is an iconic game in Canada, but carries with it a measure of risk. ThinkFirst Canada's top tips to reduce your chances of sustaining a catastrophic injury while playing our nation's favourite game are below. This information is taken from Chapter 21 "Ice Hockey" in the ThinkFirst book entitled *Catastrophic Injuries in Sports and Recreation: Causes and Prevention – A Canadian Study* edited by Charles H. Tator and published by the University of Toronto Press in 2008.



TOP TIPS:

- Coaches should be responsible for setting the tone of play and educating players about the risks of catastrophic injury.
- All players should have proper and regular conditioning. Players should work on strengthening their neck muscles.
- Players should wear helmets that fit snugly using the one finger-breadth rule – only one finger between strap and chin.
- Helmets should be replaced about every 3 seasons or sooner if damaged.
- Everyone on the ice should wear a helmet.
- Players should wear full facial protection. There have been no recorded blinding eye injuries in players wearing Canadian Standards Association certified face masks.
- Players should wear mouth guards.
- Coaches, leagues, and referees should be diligent in enforcing rules such as no checking from behind. Penalties should be given for illegal play.
- Illegal and dangerous play should be discouraged by coaches, trainers, referees, parents and league officials. Fights can cause catastrophic injuries.
- Arenas should have break-away goal posts.
- Coaches, players, trainers, parents and leagues should be able to recognize concussions and be aware of proper management of them.
- Hits to the head should not be allowed.
- Players should see the "Smart Hockey" video on www.thinkfirst.ca every player, every year.
- Spectators must be on the alert to prevent being struck by a puck.

DID YOU KNOW?

- During a game of hockey, the puck can travel up to 100 miles per hour.
- Hockey causes the most spinal injuries of all types of organized sports in Ontario.
- In the ThinkFirst-Tator study (2008) there were 190 catastrophic injuries in hockey in Ontario.
- The rate of injury for all types of injury in ice hockey for 1995 occurred at a rate of 13.2 participants per 100 participants (McLaren).
- According to the ThinkFirst-Tator study (2008), injury rates for males are double that of females.
- 82% of the 190 catastrophic injuries were incurred by players under the age of 30.
- According to one study, contusions, lacerations and fractures are the most common injuries in hockey.
- In the ThinkFirst-Tator study (2008), many catastrophic injuries were caused by hits from behind and hits to the head.
- In ice hockey, spine and spinal cord injury are most commonly due to a player hitting the boards head first causing axial loading to crush the spine.
- Between 1981 and 1996 there was an average of 14 spinal cord injuries per year in ice Hockey in Canada. 40% of these injuries were caused by a push or check from behind, 50% occurred between the ages of 16-20. Almost all were male. For ice hockey, the risk of catastrophic injury is 6.3 per 100,000 participants per year.

Risk Factors to Consider

Age: 11-20 year olds, during the ThinkFirst-Tator study period, 1986-1995, comprised the highest number of catastrophic injuries at 45%.

Gender: males are more likely to get injured than females.

Style of play: aggressive play puts players at increased risk.

Contact: checks, pushes, and especially checks from behind increase risk of injury.

Remember: thinkfirst.ca before you play!