

## INJURY PREVENTION TIPS FOR HOCKEY PLAYERS

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Hockey is a popular recreational sport enjoyed by individual's of all ages and abilities. Due to the high speed and aggressive play involved, hockey can put players at risk for injury. Although sticks, pucks, and skate blades can do damage, **most hockey-related injuries** occur due to collisions with other players and the boards. Fatigue and low energy of participants due to poor endurance, insufficient rest, or too much ice time can also make them more likely to get hurt.



**Most hockey injuries involve** the upper body, and can include fractures, sprains and strains of the collarbones, hands, arms, and shoulders. Low back, groin, hip, knee, and ankle injuries also occur frequently. Concussions are the most common type of head injury and are often accompanied by neck injury/pain.

Included below are some tips to help hockey players avoid and/or minimize the chances of muscle and joint injuries.

- 1. Proper training is important.** A good training program should involve cardiovascular, stretching, and strengthening exercises.
  - Cardiovascular training will increase endurance and decrease fatigue, which has been linked to injuries.
  - A comprehensive stretching program for the back, arms, shoulders, thighs, and legs should be performed both before and after games to keep muscles limber and prevent stiffness and soreness.
  - Strengthening programs improve a muscle's ability to contract and perform joint movement. Muscles also act as important shock absorbers and help prevent sprains and strains of vulnerable regions such as the back and neck, along with the shoulder, hip and groin regions.
- 2. Get enough rest and hydration.** Since fatigue is one of the most common causes of injury, even the fittest players should often take breaks to rest. Dehydration affects your energy level and your physical functioning. Drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after play.
- 3. Use the right equipment.** Properly fitting gear can make a world of difference when it comes to avoiding injury. Replace worn out equipment. Helmets have a life span of three to five years, depending on how often they are used. Helmets with face shields have been proven to reduce the severity of concussions regardless of the player's experience level and position when compared to visors alone.
- 4. Respect the rules.** Promote sportsmanship and fair play. Support a zero tolerance rule for illegal checks and maneuvers.
- 5. Take care of injuries before returning to play.** This will ensure top physical functioning and help prevent further injury and chronic pain.



Chiropractors are healthcare professionals skilled in the diagnosis and treatment of hockey-related injuries. In the event that you suffer a muscle or joint injury while playing hockey that does not subside, consider chiropractic care. For more information, visit [www.nhwc.ca](http://www.nhwc.ca). The author credits the Ontario Chiropractic Association (OCA) in the preparation of this educational information for use by its members and the public.

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