



## Hockey Injuries

Speed, skill, slapshots, slashing. These are just a few words to describe a sport that ranks third in overall injuries in young athletes. Injuries can range from sprains and strains to concussions with symptoms that affect performance on and off the ice. Parents and coaches need to understand the importance of safety, sports specific training, and injury management in efforts to keep athletes out of the injury “penalty box.”

### Common Injuries

Recent research indicates hockey injuries have doubled in the last 15 years. Common injuries include:

#### Concussion

Hockey is a high-speed collision sport, and head injuries are inevitable. Even though a collision may leave the athlete thinking they are still able to skate, it doesn't mean they haven't suffered a concussion. Make sure staff, coaches, parents, and athletes understand the symptoms of a concussion, which primarily include mental fogging and a headache. All suspected concussions should be medically evaluated.

#### Other Contact Injuries

Beyond concussion, contact injuries can occur to the shoulder, elbow, and wrist. Typically, hockey players suffer a shoulder separation or broken collarbone due to contact with players, boards, or the ice. Elbow injuries occur secondary to protecting the puck. Tissues that protect the elbow joint can be repeatedly bumped and, without intervention, can affect how athletes protect themselves and how they pass the puck. Fractures are common in the wrist due to slips and falls on ice or ramming into the boards.

#### Overuse Injuries

Injuries occur as the body adapts to repeated and prolonged trunk flexion with wide hip motions as muscles become weak and/or tight. The back usually suffers muscle or joint strain due to checking and hyperextension, and the mechanics of skating put significant stress on the hip joints and surrounding muscles. Most common injuries to the hips are groin or hip flexor strains due to explosive contractions and inflexibility. Padding can protect areas where players are susceptible to a direct impact, but in some cases, hockey players may still experience hip pointers or bursitis. Also, due to the mechanics of hockey, the knee is vulnerable to ligament sprains as athletes push off the inside of the skate blade.

## What causes these injuries?

- wearing inappropriate equipment for the position or wearing ill-fitting equipment
- not following rules and regulations
- violent behavior
- pre-existing injuries
- poor warm-up before games
- poor sport-specific conditioning
- poor lower extremity flexibility
- poor core strength



## Injury Treatment and Prevention

Because one out of every four injuries in hockey involves the head, it is crucial for the young athlete to understand that face masks need to be worn for protection. The athlete should also wear position-specific equipment.

A preseason physical and/or screening can identify flexibility, strength, and agility deficits that, with proper exercise, can be remedied for an injury-free season.

## What is the Young Athlete Program?

UPMC Sports Medicine's Young Athlete Program brings together a network of specialists that provides individualized attention for injury prevention and management.

Our physicians and physical therapists use cutting-edge, science-based techniques to help speed recovery, and quickly and safely prepare the athlete to return to the field of play. Athletic trainers, sports performance coaches, and other experts focus on injury prevention, nutrition, conditioning, and activity-specific training.

Regardless of age or sport, the Young Athlete Program has the expertise, technology, and services to make a difference for your athlete. For more information or to make an appointment, call 412-432-3700 or visit [UPMC.com/SportsMedicine](http://UPMC.com/SportsMedicine).

Our partner, Centers for Rehab Services, offers your young athlete physical therapy services at more than 40 convenient locations. To find an office near you, or to make an appointment, call 412-432-3700.