

Preventing Hockey Injuries



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing



Facts and Safety Tips
for Hockey

Modify rules and equipment for children

- Encourage children and beginners to play Rookey (at schools), Hook in2 Hockey and Half Field to develop good skills and correct technique.

Other safety tips

- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Drink water before, during and after play.
- Wear sunscreen, appropriate clothing and a hat when playing outside.
- Do NOT play in extreme heat or wet/cold conditions (seek advice on a weather policy from your state sporting association).
- Qualified first aid personnel, first aid kits, ice packs and a stretcher should be available at all times.
- Telephone access, to contact emergency services, is essential.

If an injury occurs

- Injured or bleeding players should be removed from the field immediately.
- Injured players should seek prompt attention from qualified first aid personnel or a sports medicine professional.
- Players should be fully rehabilitated before returning to play.
- An ankle brace should be worn for at least three months after serious ankle injury.



For further information contact

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References

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Facts on hockey injuries

Hockey is a popular international Olympic sport. In Australia, hockey is played at clubs, schools and indoor centres.

Statistics from the Australian Sports Commission's 2006 survey showed an estimated 157,600 Australians aged 15 years and older played outdoor hockey in the 12 months prior to being surveyed. An additional 26,300 people played indoor hockey.

Hockey places many demands on the technical and physical skills of players. During the course of play, players accelerate, decelerate and change direction all whilst trying to hit, pass, stop/trap or dribble the ball. As a result, injuries can and do occur.

How many injuries?

- From 2002-2003, 193 people were admitted to hospitals across Australia for hockey-related injuries, at a rate of 108 injuries per 100,000 hockey players.
- During this period, the hospitalisation rate per 100,000 participants was four times higher for males.
- In 2006, 35 people were admitted to Victorian hospitals and 457 people visited Victorian emergency departments for hockey-related injuries.
- The rate of injury for community level hockey players is 15 injuries per 1,000 playing hours.
- The rate of injury for a community hockey team is one injury every three games and four training sessions.
- The rate of injury during games is twice the rate of injury during practice.
- Injury rates are higher at the start of the season.
- Goalkeepers have the highest injury rates, followed by multi-position players and midfielders.

The causes and types of injuries

- Common causes of injuries are being struck by the ball or stick, contact with the playing surface and contact with other players.
- Injuries to the fingers/thumb, knee, ankle, thigh and head/face are the most common.

- Common types of injuries are bruising and muscle strains or tears.
- Back pain is also common.
- More serious injuries, such as broken bones, concussion and ligament ruptures, are less common.

Factors increasing your injury risk

- Not wearing protective equipment.
- Poor physical conditioning.
- The amount and level of participation.
- Having had a back problem.
- Having had a sports injury in the previous 12 months.
- Poor rehabilitation.

Factors decreasing your injury risk

- Undertaking a sport-specific training program, preferably designed by a qualified exercise or sports professional.
- Having had experience playing hockey in the previous 12 months.
- Excellent stamina.
- Being physically active beyond hockey.
- Not drinking alcohol 48 hours before a game.

Safety tips for hockey

Good preparation is important

- Avoid playing with a pre-existing illness or injury. If in doubt, talk to your doctor.
- Always warm up, stretch and cool down, especially the lower back.
- Undertake a training program to develop skills and techniques before competition.
- Undergo a fitness program to develop endurance, strength, balance, coordination and flexibility.

Good technique and practices will help prevent injury

- Know the rules and play fairly.
- Instruction on correct techniques should be available.
- Coaches/officials should be appropriately qualified.

Use appropriate equipment and make the environment safe

- Use equipment appropriate to age and stage of development.
- Check and maintain club facilities and the playing surface to ensure they are in good condition and free of hazards.
- Clubs and schools should have risk management plans to manage injury risks.

Wear the right protective equipment

- Wear a mouthguard, preferably custom-fitted, and shock absorbent shin guards at all times.
- Goalkeepers must wear headgear, leg guards and kickers during training and competition. They should also consider hand, body, upper arm, elbow, forearm and thigh protectors.
- Consider preventive ankle taping and bracing to reduce injury risks.
- Seek professional advice on footwear.

