

Ban bodychecking in youth hockey to prevent concussions

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Bodychecking in youth hockey leagues should be banned to prevent concussions which can cause serious repercussions, states an analysis in CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal).

Concussions in junior hockey are quite prevalent, with up to 25% of all players in one season sustaining these injuries, according to a recent study. Approximately 500,000 young people in Canada play hockey in organized leagues.

"The fact is that the vast majority of concussions, and hockey injuries overall, at all levels of play, are caused by legal bodychecking," writes Dr. Syd Johnson, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. "It's safe to say that as long as bodychecking is a part of ice hockey, a high rate of concussions will also be a part of hockey."

Concussions can cause fatigue, poor concentration, headaches and [memory loss](#) which can affect academic and athletic performance. Repeat concussions are a risk factor for chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) which can lead to permanent behavioural and personality changes, early dementia and other serious neurological changes.

Bodychecking should be banned from junior hockey to prevent serious injuries such as concussions. "If youth hockey players are not exposed to bodychecking, their chances of experiencing a concussion will decrease considerably," writes Dr. Johnson. "Because the damaging effects of

concussion are cumulative, the fewer concussions a youth player has sustained, the better off they'll be in the short and long term."

"The way hockey is played by the professionals is imitated in junior hockey," writes the author. "This creates a vicious cycle in which young athletes learn to play in a way that inevitably causes injury and in turn influence the next generation of players. It's time to break that cycle and teach youths to play in a way that emphasizes skill and protects their brains, so they'll be prepared to do the same when they grow up," she concludes.

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

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