

# No injury spike in Bantam bodychecking

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A new study published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* by University of Calgary Faculty of Kinesiology researcher Dr. Carolyn Emery and colleagues has shown that when bodychecking is introduced into Bantam ice hockey there is no difference between overall injury rates or concussion, regardless of whether players have prior bodychecking experience in Pee Wee.

Emery, co-chair of the Sport [Injury Prevention](#) Research Centre at the University of Calgary Sport Medicine Centre, began by comparing [injury](#) and concussion rates in Alberta where bodychecking is allowed, to those in Quebec where bodychecking is not introduced until Bantam (13-14 year olds). She found a three-fold increased risk of injury in Alberta, and a four-fold increased risk of concussion.

"When we did that study, we repeatedly heard from advocates for bodychecking in Pee Wee that the injury rate in Bantam would be much higher for players without Pee Wee bodychecking experience," said Emery, who is cross appointed with the Faculty of Medicine. "What we found is that the overall injury and concussion risk did not differ between Bantam leagues."

The Bantam study compared injury rates between 68 Alberta teams (995 players) with 62 Quebec teams (976 players.) As in the previous study, this study used valid injury surveillance and injury assessment by team physiotherapists and athletic therapists, along with follow-up by sport medicine physicians. There were 272 injuries (51 concussions) in Alberta, compared to 244 injuries (49 concussions) reported in Quebec.

The researchers did note a higher rate of "severe" injuries (33 per cent) in Quebec Bantam hockey. "Severe injuries" are categorized as injury that resulted in players missing over a week of hockey. Emery says that this could be related to skills learned in a Pee Wee bodychecking league, or could simply be that the Alberta League has more players who didn't drop out of hockey after bodychecking was introduced in Pee Wee hockey – the so-called "survivor" effect. The most common specific injury type was concussion. Risk was higher for players reporting a previous injury or concussion as well as for [players](#) in their first year of Bantam in both provinces.

Dr. Emery, who is funded by Alberta Innovates – Health Solutions and Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation, says, "The overall injury rates and concussion rates between the two leagues were very similar, and certainly didn't reflect the giant spike in injury that was predicted by Pee Wee bodychecking advocates. We found nothing to offset the three fold greater risk of injuries and four fold greater risk of concussion in Pee Wee when bodychecking is allowed."

"I hope this study informs policy makers in youth ice hockey regarding the scientific evidence to support the delay of bodychecking in games until Bantam," says Emery. "Our research supports the findings of 14 out of 15 other studies that show a greater risk of injury in a bodychecking league compared to leagues that do not allow bodychecking. In addition, we have clearly shown that there is no injury or [concussion](#) spike in Bantam [hockey](#) that would offset the 300 per cent increase in injury risk and 400 per cent increase in [concussion](#) risk that we see in Pee Wee leagues that allow body checking."

**More information:** [www.cmaj.ca/cgi/doi/10.1503/cmaj.110634](http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/doi/10.1503/cmaj.110634)

Provided by University of Calgary

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