

# Reducing lifelong disability from sports injuries in children

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To protect children from lifelong injuries in sports, we need a public health approach similar to that mounted against smoking and drunk driving, states an editorial in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

The annual rate of catastrophic injury in sports or recreational activities is 6.9 per 100 000 [participants](#), and many of the injured are children and youth under age 21. Nearly 500 Ontarians alone are hospitalized each year from hockey injuries and concussions in particular can have long-term impacts on health and quality of life.

"Reducing lifelong disability from [sports injuries](#) in children and youth demands a public health solution similar to that used to combat smoking and drunk driving," write Drs. Alun Ackery, University of Toronto, and Allan Detsky, Mount Sinai Hospital, with [CMAJ](#) Editor-in-Chief Paul Hébert and the editorial writing team. "A coordinated, multifaceted approach involving awareness, education and rule changes is required."

It is important to rest when injured, but our society often admires athletes who continue to play while injured.

"Unnecessary risk taking and violent physical contact in sport need to be 'denormalized' through education and awareness campaigns," state the authors.

They suggest that changing rules regarding risk and injury will work.

Parents can pressure sports organizations to change rules, former professional athletes who suffered debilitating injuries can help, and the medical professional can provide evidence about what how to prevent injury and create guidelines for recovery times before returning to play.

"This is about keeping our young players healthy to enjoy the rest of their lives," the authors conclude. "Unnecessary lifelong disability will not help anyone, least of all a minor who cannot fully appreciate the consequences of serious injury."

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

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