

Bodychecking experience does not lower risk of injury for teen hockey players

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Youth hockey players with more years of bodychecking experience were at significantly higher risk of concussion than their peers with less bodychecking experience, according to new research in *CMAJ*

(Canadian Medical Association Journal).

"We found that among ice hockey players aged 15–17 years in elite leagues that allow bodychecking, the rates of injury and concussion were more than double for those with more bodychecking experience (3 or more years) relative to players with less than 2 years of experience," says Dr. Paul Eliason, lead author and postdoctoral scholar at the Sport Injury Prevention Research Center, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta.

Despite the strong evidence that disallowing bodychecking in youth ice hockey games reduces the rates of injury including concussion, some have argued that gaining experience in bodychecking earlier may protect players from injuries, including concussions, when they age up to leagues where policy allows bodychecking in games.

Researchers collected injury surveillance data on 941 [hockey players](#) aged 15–17 on 186 teams in Alberta, Canada, over three playing seasons (2015/16 to 2017/18) to determine the association between cumulative years of experience of bodychecking in games where it was allowed and rates of injury and concussion among players. Regardless of duration of bodychecking experience, concussion was the most common injury in this age group, making up more than one-third (34%) of all injuries.

"This evaluation provides important evidence for the recent, as well as future, [policy decisions](#) regarding bodychecking in youth ice hockey, and helps ensure that no unintended consequences have occurred because of these policies," says Dr. Carolyn Emery, principal investigator, Canada Research Chair and Chair of the Sport Injury Prevention Research Center, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta.

"This study provides further evidence in support of removing bodychecking in youth ice [hockey](#) to reduce rates of [injury](#) and

[concussion](#)," write the authors.

More information: Bodychecking experience and rates of injury among ice hockey players aged 15–17 years, *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2022). [DOI: 10.1503/cmaj.211718](https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.211718)

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