

# New review calls on Hockey Canada to raise age of body contact from 13 to 15

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Hockey leagues in Canada should overhaul current rules and regulations to raise the age of bodychecking in the game from 13 to 15, says new research into the effect of body contact on teens.

The literature review was led by Dr. Kristian Goulet of the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Medicine and Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) and calls on provincial and territorial governments to mandate schools—including those involved with school sports—and sports organizations to establish, update, and enforce policies and protocols to prevent [concussion](#), with a keen focus on body contact.

Currently, [hockey](#) organizations in Canada allow body contact in competitive and recreational leagues from the age of 13. But studies have shown when body contact is initiated, injuries increase significantly, including concussion rates.

Almost half of hockey injuries are caused by bodychecking, with injury rates four times higher for kids and teens in leagues that allowed bodychecking. Other studies have found concussion rates decrease by over 50% when eliminating body contact. An estimated 200,000 concussions occur annually in Canada, with children and youth affected primarily. Ice hockey is the leading cause of all sports and recreationally related TBI across pediatric age groups, in both boys and girls.

Dr. Goulet is hopeful this review will spur Hockey Canada to lead a new path forward to strengthen our understanding of concussion and guidance for clinical management, especially related to acute care, persistent symptoms, and prevention.

"Sport is incredibly important for the mental physical emotional and social health of our kids. However, it is our duty as health care providers, parents, coaches, administrators and [decision makers](#), that we take all reasonable efforts to make sport as safe as possible," says Dr. Goulet, an Assistant Professor in uOttawa's Faculty of Medicine and the Medical Director of The CHEO Concussion Clinic, The Eastern Ontario Concussion Clinic, and The Pediatric Sports Medicine Clinic of Ottawa.

The work is published in the journal *Paediatrics & Child Health*.

**More information:** Kristian Goulet et al, Sport-related concussion and bodychecking in children and youth: Evaluation, management, and policy implications, *Paediatrics & Child Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.1093/pch/pxad007](https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxad007)

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