

Schoolboy rugby players have more injuries the older they get

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Credit: Rhys Park via Wikimedia Commons

The number of injuries sustained while playing rugby, and match and training days lost as a result, is higher among players under age 18 than it is among those under 13 and under 15, reveals [a study](#) of 66 schoolboy

teams from 35 secondary schools in England, published in the open access journal *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine*.

The tackle was the most frequent source of injury, and concussions the most common injury type in all age groups and across all three seasons: 2017–18, 2018–19, and 2019–20 (September–April).

Those [players](#) under 18 sustained nearly 35 injuries and lost 941 match/training days for every 1,000 hours of play. The equivalent figures for those under 13 were 21 injuries and 477 lost days, while those for the players under 15 were nearly 25 injuries and 602 lost days.

Contact incidents accounted for most (87%) of the known injuries, with the tackle responsible for around half among those under 13 (52%) and under 15 (48%), compared with 62% among the players under 18.

Concussion was the most common injury type across all age groups: 5 /1,000 hours among the under-13 group; 6.5 among the under-15 group; and just over nine among the under-18 group.

"It is possible that, as players mature, increases in [mass](#), [strength](#) and [speed](#) produce greater forces within contact events, which may also be increasing in frequency with age. It is also possible that players are playing to a higher standard as they get older," explain the researchers.

"The findings indicate that the focus of injury prevention strategies should be on concussion and the tackle," they conclude.

More information: Matthew V Hancock et al, Match injuries in English schoolboy rugby union, *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine* (2024). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjsem-2023-001740](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjsem-2023-001740)

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