

**Hockey Injury Prevention**

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According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS), more than 500,000 individuals are involved in youth hockey programs. Although it is a fast moving and potentially dangerous sport, it requires patience, guidance, and practice through pre-hockey instruction and experienced coaching staff. In addition to mastering skills and fundamentals on the ice, proper conditioning "off the ice," such as exercise, diet and hydration is critical to help maintain health. The following are key points to remember prior to play.

* Equipment - "A safe hockey player is a protected hockey player." Necessary equipment such as helmets, mouth guards, and padding is essential to prevent injury. Proper fitting is key so the athlete can move freely while on the ice. Although equipment can be expensive, well manufactured, and proper fitting is an essential part of a safe season.
* Diet - Proper nutrition and hydration is mandatory for health. Avoiding high-content fatty foods, caffeine, and moderation of supplementation can promote healthy tissue and overall well-being. Hydration, with the most common source of "water" will prevent diminished athletic performance. Therefore, substitute that "pop" or "special coffee" with water to maintain your hydration and performance.
* Conditioning - Hockey is a sport that requires conditioning "on and off the ice. Dry land training helps an athlete condition with weights to help strengthen muscle for contact and shooting, while running peaks cardiovascular performance. Following your coaches’ programs will allow for a "safe and healthy" season.

Athletics is a choice to participate while mastering skills, fundamentals, and teamwork, to earn a sense of accomplishment. Ice hockey is just that. Without mastering the art of skating and proper conditioning, one may sustain to an unwanted injury. Therefore, to prevent an injury is always the goal so one can enjoy their chosen sport. Therefore, train smart, play fair, and enjoy.

Source: American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS). Hockey and injury prevention. (2011). http://www.ortkoinfo.aaos.org