

# Young hockey player injuries studied

November 2 2005

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A University at Buffalo study suggests unintentional collisions and falling into boards cause more injuries among young hockey players than do body checks.

In a study that followed 2,630 boys over two seasons, results showed 55 percent of injuries were caused by unintentional collisions, while body checks accounted for only 12 percent of injuries. Seventeen percent of injuries were caused by illegal checking.

Body checking frequently has been blamed for injuries among young players, and the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended body checking be prohibited until players are at least 16 years old.

However, Barry Willer, a professor of psychiatry and rehabilitation medicine at the University at Buffalo -- part of the State University of New York system -- says waiting until players are in their teens to introduce body checking may increase the incidence of more serious injuries.

"Bringing body checking into the game at an age when players are big, strong, fast skaters fueled by testosterone, could be disastrous from an injury standpoint," the former hockey player and coach said.

Willer's study is detailed in the current issue of *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*.

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Citation: Young hockey player injuries studied (2005, November 2) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2005-11-young-hockey-player-injuries.html>

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