Did you know ...

Body checking is the main cause of injuries in hockey

- Body checking is the primary mechanism of injury in minor hockey players. The evidence shows that body checking accounts for at least 45 per cent of injuries² and as much as 86 per cent of injuries.³

- Almost all scientific evidence indicates that hockey injuries are higher in leagues which permit body checking.⁴⁻⁶,⁷ Only one recent study fails to identify an association between injury and body checking.⁸

Did you know ...

Injuries from body checking in hockey are numerous and can be severe

- Capital Health data show that hockey injuries are responsible for the most sports related emergency department visits: 1,400 per year for children up to 19 years of age.⁹ Hockey is second only to basketball in terms of the rate of injuries in high school athletes.¹⁰

- A Capital Health study took a look at the rate and severity of injuries for 11 year olds following the introduction of body checking at that age level in 2002.¹¹ The results clearly show that 11 year olds exposed to body checking (Peewee Level) sustained twice the rate of injuries and twice the rate of severe injuries, compared with those not exposed to body checking (Atom Level).

- Injuries from body checking include severe injuries such as head injuries, concussions, neck sprain or strain, joint dislocation and fractures.¹² Some children are unable to participate in sports following repeated concussions associated with hockey. Not only does this impair their ability to remain active but may lead to permanent learning disabilities, other neurological and psychiatric problems, and more violent behavior.¹²
**Did you know ...**

**proper coaching and training of body checking skills does not reduce the risk of injury**

- There is evidence that training for body checking does not reduce injuries. A recent study showed that even when special training on legal body checking was provided as part of an educational program in Bantam level players, it did not result in a reduction in the frequency of injuries, illegal body checks or penalties.13

- There is also evidence that the injury profile is similar between injuries caused by legal and illegal checks,14 suggesting that the checking itself is the cause of injury, not the technique or skills of the players involved.

**Did you know ...**

**introducing body checking at earlier ages does not reduce the risk of injury**

- A recent study suggests that there is no protective effect from learning to body check at an earlier age.4 The evidence showed that the risk of a body checking related injury is greater for 14-15 year olds who had been introduced to body checking at a younger age, than for their cohorts who had played without body checking in their younger years. Other evidence suggests that early introduction to body checking is likely to prolong the child’s exposure to greater injury risks.12

**Did you know ...**

**various health organizations advocate raising the age at which body checking is introduced in order to reduce injuries in minor hockey**

- A Capital Health sponsored study recommends that the age at which body checking is introduced in minor hockey be raised from its current levels.11

- The Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine recommends that body checking be eliminated from levels of minor hockey which are not designed as training for professional and international ranks. And further, that age 14-15 is the earliest age to begin teaching body checking techniques.15

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that body checking should not be allowed in youth hockey for children age 15 years or younger.16

**Did you know ...**

**body checking is restricted in some areas of hockey**

- The province of Quebec prohibits body checking until the Bantam Level (age 13-14 since 2002, age 14-15 pre-2002) and restricts body checking to elite level teams. Moreover, the Québec International Pee-Wee Hockey Tournament, one of the most popular pee-wee tournaments in the world, is played without body checking.

- Female hockey, involving players from minor hockey to the highest national and international levels, involves no body checking, but is still a competitive, physical game.

**References**

1. Hockey Canada. Check it out! Background on Checking, [2003?]

**What you can do ...**

**to promote healthy physical activity in a safe environment**

- Read more about the issue by looking into the studies cited here or by going to the following website ([www.capitalhealth.ca/safehockey](http://www.capitalhealth.ca/safehockey))

- Ask your local hockey organization what they are doing to reduce and prevent injuries that occur due to body checking, and whether they would consider re-examining the age at which body checking is introduced.