



## Common lacrosse injuries

### Two different games

Lacrosse is gaining popularity among both boys and girls. The quickness and flow of the game make it similar in many ways to sports like basketball, soccer and hockey, but the ball handling, passing and shooting skills required in competitive lacrosse make it a game unlike any other.

The general rules of play are the same in boys' and girls' lacrosse. The main difference is that the boys' game allows body-to-body contact and girls' lacrosse does not. For boys, that means bumps, bruises, breaks and even concussions can occur. The ban on contact in the girls' game does not make lacrosse injury-free— young female athletes sustain their share of bruises, cuts, sprains and strains as well.



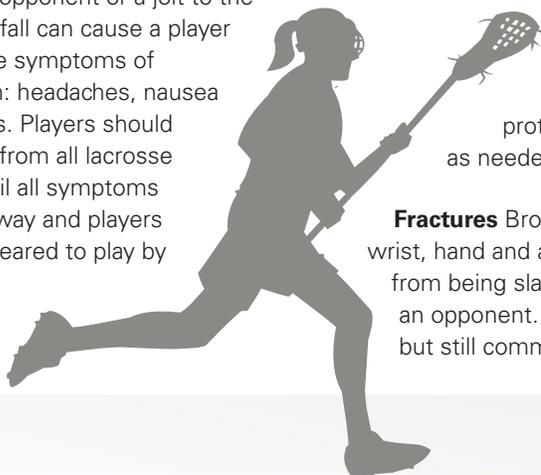
## Lacrosse Safety

### Common accidents, serious injuries

#### Ankle and knee ligament sprains

The most common injuries in both girls' and boys' lacrosse, these injuries can occur when players cut and dodge.

**Concussions** Blows to the head by a stick or an opponent or a jolt to the head from a fall can cause a player to display the symptoms of a concussion: headaches, nausea and dizziness. Players should be removed from all lacrosse activities until all symptoms have gone away and players have been cleared to play by a medical professional.



#### A stick to the body or face

Serious injuries may be caused by a stick to the body or face. Boys are required to wear helmets and face guards, as well as gloves and shoulder pads. For girls, goggles and mouth guards are required. All players may wear other protective guards as needed.

**Fractures** Broken bones in the wrist, hand and ankle may result from being slashed by the stick of an opponent. Slashing is illegal but still common in lacrosse.

#### Hard ball

Contact with the ball can result in bruises, and on rare occasions, breaks. Lacrosse balls are made of hard, solid rubber and, as every player knows, getting hit by a ball really hurts!

#### Shoulders

Collisions with players may result in separated or dislocated shoulders.



# Preventing lacrosse injuries

## Injury risks in lacrosse

- **Ankle sprains** account for 21 percent of all reported lacrosse injuries for girls and 16 percent for boys. Players with a history of ankle sprains are at a high risk of sustaining another sprain. If you're recovering from an ankle sprain, make sure you're at full strength and cleared by a medical professional before resuming play. Consider wearing a brace to guard against further injury.
- **Knees** are particularly vulnerable in lacrosse. Tears to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and meniscus are common, as is ligament and cartilage damage.
- **Non-contact injuries, like muscle strains of the hamstrings, quadriceps and groin** are common. These overuse injuries can often be treated with ice, stretching and rest.
- Continuous running, particularly on hard, artificial field surfaces, can cause **foot blisters and shin splints** (pain along the inner edge of the shin bone).
- In lacrosse, the lower extremities are usually uncovered. Players often sustain **cuts and bruises** to their legs, mostly from being slashed by the sticks of opposing players. These problems can be addressed by cleaning and bandaging wounds and by wearing lower-leg pads. Boys are required to wear protective cups.
- **Goalkeepers are at great risk for injuries from sticks and balls and contact with players and the goal.** For this reason, boy and girl goalkeepers are required to wear throat and chest protectors, in addition to helmets with face masks, mouth pieces and gloves.



## Stick to it! Conditioning Tips

- **Lacrosse is a physically demanding game, so it's recommended that players stay in shape year round.** Cross-training, or playing sports other than lacrosse, is a great way to get in shape and prevent the burnout that can result from playing the same sport all the time. No matter what the training, young lacrosse players should make sure they can handle the constant running the game demands, and they should focus on upper body conditioning so they can pass and shoot effectively.
- **Before games and practices, players should warm up properly.** Start with several minutes of stretching, focusing on the hamstrings, quadriceps and hip muscles. Light jogging and agility exercises, like lunges and high steps, are also recommended.
- **During games and practices, players should stay hydrated.** Coaches, staff and parents should make sure there's plenty of water on hand.
- **Wearing the right protective equipment is important for player safety.** Make sure all equipment fits snugly and meets league standards for quality. Also, wear shoes specifically designed for lacrosse and match the shoes to the surface you're playing on—real grass or artificial turf.
- **Lacrosse players should have at least one or two days a week and three or four months a year away from the game.** Rest prevents burnout and the risk of overuse injuries like sprains, strains and fatigue.
- **When a player is hurt, he or she should tell a coach, and come out of the game or practice.** Playing while hurt may make your injury more severe.



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This piece is part of an informational series on sports injury prevention produced by the Orthopedic Center/Sports Medicine Division at Boston Children's Hospital. For materials on preventing injuries in other sports, call 617-355-3501 or visit [bostonchildrens.org/sportsmed](http://bostonchildrens.org/sportsmed).



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