

Preventing injuries for

FOOTBALL



TOP TIPS

- All players should have access to adequate pre- seasonal, seasonal, and on-field medical expertise.
- Players should be matched to size, strength, power, skill level, fitness and experience.
- Players should undergo a proper conditioning regimen which includes strengthening neck muscles.
- Implement a year round conditioning and training program to maintain muscle strength, balance, coordination, flexibility, mobility, agility, and endurance.
- Players should be taught the essential skills of football, especially tackling and blocking.
- Discourage all foul play and strictly enforce rules.
- Limit contact during practice, instead use equipment to teach strategies.
- Properly fit players with protective equipment: helmet, shoulder and neck padding, and amouthguard. Teach them to appropriately pad and tape themselves.
- Players and coaches should understand the basics of injury mechanisms, how to identify a serious injury, and when to seek help.
- Always follow proper Return to Play Guidelines if a player has a concussion.
- The field should be well maintained and an adequate buffer zone should be in place surrounding the playing area to prevent out-of-bounds injuries.

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DID YOU KNOW?

- Previous research conducted by Dr. Charles Tator and ThinkFirst (now part of Parachute) indicates that there were 30 catastrophic injuries in tackle football in Ontario. All the catastrophic injuries were sustained between the ages of 11-30.
- Fortunately, the majority of injuries in football are non-catastrophic. The most common injuries are: contusions, muscle strains, and ligament sprains.
- In the U.S. it is estimated that football accounts for 63% of all concussions sustained in high school sports.
- Head injury is the most common injury responsible for death in tackle football, followed by cervical spine injury. Head injury makes up 69% of all on-field deaths.
- Of the non fatal catastrophic injuries, cervical spine injuries are the most common in tackle football.
- The most common cause of spinal cord injury is from axial loading to the spine when players spear each other head first during a tackle.

RISK FACTORS TO CONSIDER

AGE AND GENDER: of the 30 catastrophic injuries 29 were sustained by males all under the age of 30.

PREVIOUS INJURIES: having a previous injury predisposes a player to re-injury.

STYLE OF PLAY: aggression, inattentiveness, and rule breaking lead to increased risk of injury.

POSITION: Defensive backs are at greatest risk for brain and spinal injury. Receivers, running backs, and quarterbacks are also at increased risk.

FIELD SURFACE: it is generally believed that natural grass is safer than artificial turf.

EQUIPMENT: properly fitted helmets and neck support reduce risk for injury

For more information on this and other sport and recreation injury topics, please refer to the following text: Tator, C.H. (Ed.) (2008). *Catastrophic Injuries in Sports and Recreation: Causes and Prevention – A Canadian Study*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press Incorporated



Parachute is bringing attention to preventable injury and helping Canadians reduce their risk of injury and enjoy long lives lived to the fullest.

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