

Each month we will present a brief article on various health & safety issues relevant to youth hockey players. Today, we hear from physicians at Midwest Orthopaedics at Rush on hip and groin injuries that can occur in hockey.

Foot and Ankle Injuries

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Injuries to the foot and ankle are common in hockey players. They can be minor such as contusions (bruises) or severe, like some types of fractures (broken bones) that require surgery.

Ankle sprains are a common injury in sports. The more common type of ankle sprain (low or lateral ankle sprain) is a stretch or tear of the lateral ligaments. The stiffness and support of skates make this less common in hockey players. Instead, hockey players more often get high ankle (syndesmotic) sprains after a twisting injury. The athlete may have pain, swelling, bruising, and trouble walking. These are treated with crutches or a walking boot, time off from hockey, and physical therapy. Athletes are often out of hockey for at least 6 weeks with a high ankle sprain.

Lace bite is another common injury in hockey. This happens when a skate doesn't fit properly—it may be new and stiff, old and worn down, or tied too tightly. This causes tendinitis of the tibialis anterior, the muscle that dorsiflexes the foot (brings the toes up towards the shin). The athlete will have pain and swelling at the front of the ankle and may have pain with moving the foot up and down. Lace bite is treated with ice, anti-inflammatories, and in severe cases, taking time off from hockey. Adding padding to the front of the skate or massaging the tongue can help the skate fit better and improve symptoms.

Contusions (bruises) are also common. These result from trauma, such as getting hit by a puck or making contact with another player. The athlete will have pain, swelling, and bruising which resolves in around 2 weeks. Contusions are treated with ice, anti-inflammatories, and rest as needed.

A fracture (broken bone) can look like a contusion, but symptoms will be more severe. If there is any concern for a fracture, the athlete should stay off the foot, rest from hockey, and see a doctor for x-rays. Some fractures are treated with casts, walking boots, and crutches. Others require surgery. When the athlete can return to hockey varies and may be as short as 6-8 weeks or as long as a few months.

In summary, foot and ankle injuries are common in hockey and many can be treated with medications, rest, ice, and exercises. Even so, some injuries require a more detailed evaluation. If your athlete experiences a foot or ankle injury, you may want to schedule an appointment with a doctor who's familiar with hockey and sports injuries.

Midwest Orthopaedics at Rush is the #1 orthopedic practice in the State of Illinois. To make an appointment, visit www.rushortho.com or call 877-MD-BONES