

# Risky business

Bodychecking in peewee hockey triples the chances of injury, concussion, according to a university study

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The Canadian Press

CALGARY — Bodychecking more than triples the risk of injury and concussion in peewee hockey, according to a study conducted by the University of Calgary.

Researchers compared rates of injury between peewee teams in Alberta and Quebec. Bodychecking is allowed at the peewee level in Alberta but not in Quebec.

Peewee hockey players are 11 and 12 years old.

The study was conducted during the 2007-08 season on 74 boys' teams from Alberta (1,108 players) and 76 from Quebec (1,046 players).

There were 269 injuries in Alberta compared to 70 in Quebec, according to the study.

In a breakdown of injury

types, the study determined that there were 73 severe injuries and concussions in Alberta versus 20 in Quebec. A total of 14 severe concussions occurred in Alberta to four in Quebec.

Quebec introduces bodychecking at the bantam level when players are 13 and 14.

"It's certainly shown that playing in a peewee league where bodychecking is permitted is associated with a more than three-fold increased risk of injury, concussion, severe injury, severe concussion compared to a league where bodychecking is not permitted at the same level of play," says lead researcher Carolyn Emery, who is a sport epidemiologist and trained athletic therapist at the University of Calgary.

The study will be published in Wednesday's edition of the *Journal of the American Medi-*

*cal Association.*

Emery, a hockey parent and coach, expects her research to spark a debate about whether bodychecking should be allowed at the peewee level.

"If bodychecking were eliminated in Alberta peewee, it is estimated that out of the 8,826 players registered, we could prevent over 1,000 game-related injuries per year and over 400 game-related concussions per year," she says.

## Concussion alert

Janice Paskey of Calgary says her 12-year-old son was on "concussion alert," meaning she had to watch him closely for concussion symptoms, three times in his first season of peewee hockey. She also took him to the hospital once to be examined for a concussion.

"I've seen him there lying on the ice motionless," Pas-

key says. "I know I'm going to come across as just another mom who doesn't want her kid hurt."

"We moved from Quebec and there are days I wish we were still there and my kid was playing and he wasn't going to face this for another few years. But there's tons of people who disagree. They feel it's part of the game."

Paskey says her son loves the bodychecking aspect and feels it's important for his hockey development.

Bodychecking in the younger levels of minor hockey has long been a contentious issue.

Hockey Canada approved a motion in 2002 to allow all minor hockey branches to introduce bodychecking at atom levels (age 9 and 10), but quickly reversed that decision a year later and raised the minimum age to peewee.



MARK O'NEILL/TORONTO SUN FILES

A University of Calgary study has determined the risk of injury and concussion more than triples for peewee hockey players, whose associations allow them to bodycheck.