



Common field hockey injuries

Hands, legs, head and face

Field hockey is second only to soccer as the most popular team sport in the world. In the U.S., field hockey is mostly a women's game, but both men and women enjoy the sport worldwide.

Most field hockey injuries result from being hit with a ball or stick. These injuries primarily affect the hands, lower legs, head and face. Because field hockey players run hard and change direction quickly, players may also sustain muscle strains, ankle sprains and knee injuries such as ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) tears. Field hockey is not considered a contact sport, but contact does occur—and contact can result in bruises, fractures, and even concussions.



Player Safety

Common accidents, serious injuries

Foul balls Hitting the ball at an angle to make it rise ("undercutting") and intentionally hitting an opponent with the ball are major fouls in field hockey—and they may lead to serious injuries.

Hands and fingers

Because of the way field hockey players grip their sticks with the lead hand low to the ground, hand and finger injuries, including broken bones, are common.

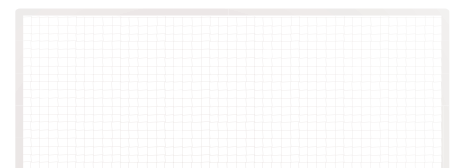


Tough turf Field hockey is often played on artificial surfaces. These hard surfaces can contribute to hand injuries, skin abrasions, joint pain and head injuries, including concussions.

Too much Playing too often or for too long can cause overuse injuries. Low back pain, tendinitis of the hip, knee or ankle, and stress fractures of the leg and foot may be addressed by

allowing enough time for rest and recovery between games and practices.

Heads up Concussions make up about seven percent of field hockey injuries. Coaches, staff and parents who observe concussion symptoms like headaches, nausea, dizziness and lack of balance should remove players from the field and seek medical attention.



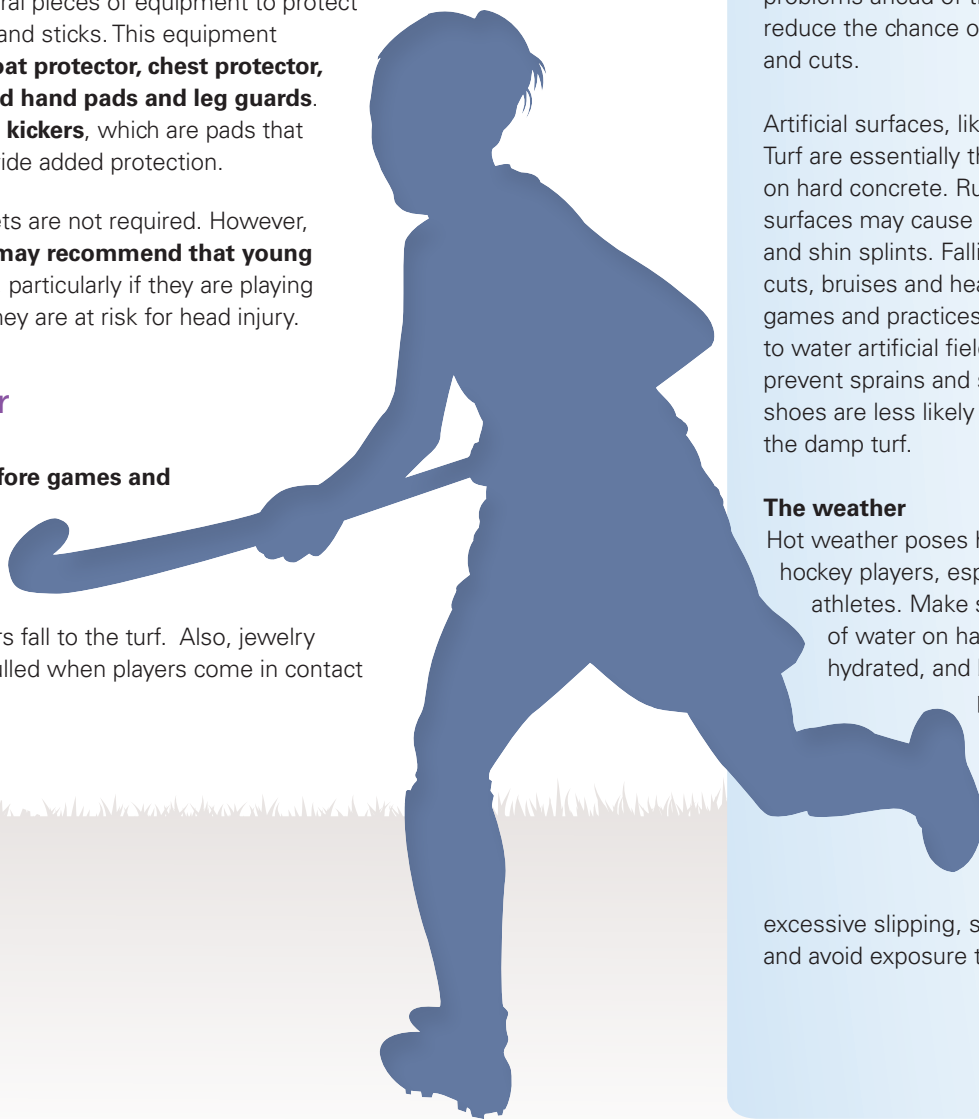
How can you prevent field hockey injuries?

What to wear

- **Mouth guards** protect the teeth from injuries caused by contact with sticks, balls and opponents.
- Many leagues require **goggles** for eye protection.
- Players can protect their lower legs with **plastic or foam shin guards**. Make sure they fit snugly and cover the area from the knee to the top of the shoes.
- Wearing **close-fitting gloves** reduces the risk of hand and finger injuries.
- Goalkeepers wear several pieces of equipment to protect themselves from balls and sticks. This equipment includes a **helmet, throat protector, chest protector, padded pants, arm and hand pads and leg guards**. Also, goalkeepers wear **kickers**, which are pads that go over the feet to provide added protection.
- In most leagues, helmets are not required. However, **parents and coaches may recommend that young players wear helmets**, particularly if they are playing on hard surfaces or if they are at risk for head injury.

What not to wear

- **Take off all jewelry before games and practices.** Earrings, necklaces, rings and other jewelry may cause abrasions and lacerations when players fall to the turf. Also, jewelry can get caught or be pulled when players come in contact with opponents.



Is it Safe to Play?

Proper playing conditions are important, and sometimes overlooked factors in preventing field hockey injuries. Here are some tips for playing safe:

The field

Before playing or practicing on real grass, coaches, staff and players should remove all debris (glass, rocks and other harmful objects) and find any holes, bumps or hazards. Addressing these problems ahead of time will greatly reduce the chance of falls, sprains and cuts.

Artificial surfaces, like Astro Turf or Field Turf are essentially thin carpets sitting on hard concrete. Running on these surfaces may cause fatigue, muscle pain and shin splints. Falling may produce cuts, bruises and head injuries. Before games and practices, it's a good idea to water artificial fields. This helps prevent sprains and strains because shoes are less likely to catch or lock on the damp turf.

The weather

Hot weather poses hazards for all field hockey players, especially young athletes. Make sure there is plenty of water on hand to keep players hydrated, and be sure to rest players regularly when conditions are hot and humid. On rainy days, check field conditions to guard against excessive slipping, sliding and falling—and avoid exposure to lightning.



**Reviewed by Peter Waters, MD,
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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.



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