

Football is a physically demanding sport that requires excellent strength, flexibility, and endurance. As it is a collision sport, injuries are common. However, with proper equipment, planning, and preparation, the risk of injuries can be greatly reduced.

One of the most common football injuries are Burners

Burners are injuries to the nerves which pass from the neck into the arm. They occur most often when an athlete is struck on the head and shoulders at the same time, resulting in burning pain, numbness and weakness.

Although most burners resolve within minutes, some cases may take as much as weeks. Permanent injury is rare but it is important that athletes be fully recovered before returning to play, as subsequent injuries are often more severe. Recovery should be determined by a team's trainer or doctor.

The use of neck rolls or cowboy collars on the shoulder pads is recommended for players who have suffered a burner. Proper blocking and tackling techniques can also decrease the incidence of these injuries.

## PREVENTING FOOTBALL INJURIES

### How common are football injuries?

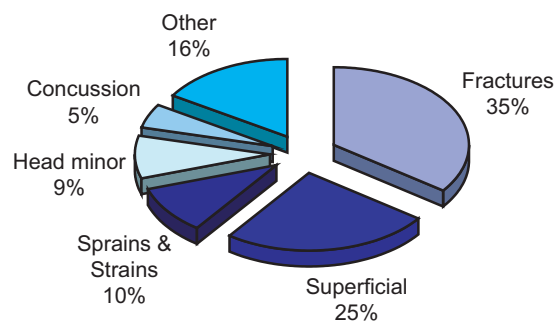
- Football is a popular sport among children and youth throughout Canada and the US. Over 100,000 Canadians currently play football!
- Approximately 10-35 injuries occur per 1000 hours played.

- The majority of injuries occur in the lower extremities, particularly in the knees and ankles.
- Concussion, resulting from player-to-player collision, is a frequent hazard in football.
- Other commonly diagnosed injuries include shoulder dislocations, separated shoulders, cervical nerve injuries (stingers) and hamstring sprains.

### What types of injuries occur?

- Virtually all football injuries result from contact between players, or between a player and the ground or another object.
- The most common type of injuries in football are contusions, sprains and strains.

Nature of injury, Under 18



## What risk factors increase the likelihood of football injury?

- Contact activities are almost five times more likely to produce injury than controlled activities.
- Decreased levels of preseason conditioning combined with a pre-season in which intensity, duration and frequency of training escalates rapidly increases the likelihood of injury.
- The physical aspects of the game (running, jumping, diving, blocking, tackling) are risk factors for injury.
- Prior injuries (especially prior head or neck injuries) and inadequate rehabilitation/incomplete healing.
- Incompetent or inexperienced coaching staff.
- Faulty and inadequate equipment and playing surfaces.

## Who gets injured?

- Injuries most commonly occur to those tackling, being tackled, or blocking.
- Players at greatest risk are *Running Backs*, *Linebackers* and *Linemen*.

## When do injuries occur?

- Injuries occur most often during actual games, and particularly in the third quarter.
- During preseason training.
- During training involving contact drills.

## Common injuries by position:

**Running Backs**  
Knee injuries

**Quarterback**  
Head and chest, hand and shoulder injuries

**Linemen**  
Ankle sprains, foot and toe, thumb and wrist injuries

**Defensive Backs**  
Hamstring and groin injuries

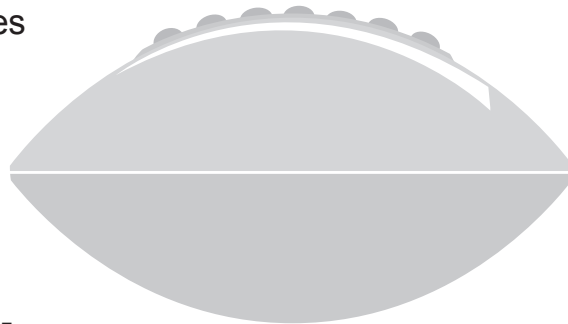
**Wide Receivers**  
Head and neck, shoulder and spine injuries



# SAFETY TIPS

## Preparation

- Cross-training exercise in the pre-season can help reduce the risk of developing overuse injuries while increasing endurance.
- A thorough warm-up and stretch is beneficial before practice or play, as well as following half-time breaks.
- All athletes should participate in a year-round conditioning program that improves their strength, flexibility and endurance.
- A pre-season training program should *gradually* increase in intensity and duration to best prepare athletes for competition.
- All players should master basic blocking and tackling drills that emphasise proper head positioning *prior* to contact or limited contact drills.
- Players *must not* tackle with their head down or use their head as a battering ram (spearing) as this increases the risk for spine injuries.
- Water should always be available to ensure adequate hydration to prevent heatstroke and heat exhaustion.



## Equipment and Environment

- All players should use the safest possible gear, equipment meeting NOCSAE requirements.
- All equipment should be properly maintained and fitted for each individual athlete.
- Equipment should be appropriate to the playing position.
  - All practice and playing areas should be well-maintained and clear of debris and spectators.
    - Athletes should wear shoes/cleats that are appropriate to the playing surface.
    - Use of mouth guards or mouth protectors properly sized for each athlete is mandatory to decrease risk of oral trauma.



## Rules and Regulations

- Rules that prevent illegal blocking or tackling must be adhered to by all athletes and enforced by officials at all times.
- Certification and continuing education is recommended for all coaches and officials to inform them of new strategies to prevent injury.
- Performance enhancing drugs greatly increase the risk of death and disease and should never be used.



*Preparing properly, using appropriate equipment and paying attention to the rules makes football a safer sport for all.*

*Stopping injuries before they occur is your responsibility! For further information on how you can prevent injuries, contact your local health unit officer or the BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit.*

*The British Columbia Injury Research and Prevention Unit (BCIRPU) is committed to meeting the challenge of making BC a safe place to live and work by coordinating efforts that will prevent or reduce injuries, their consequences, and costs.*



## INJURY HIGHLIGHT: Football Concussions

- Of all recreational sports, Football produces the most concussions.
- Concussions occur most frequently during games, and most often as the result of contact between two players.
- Studies have shown links between concussions and learning disabilities.

### Early Signs of Concussion (within seconds to minutes)

- Impaired attention
- Slurred speech
- Gross incoordination
- Disorientation
- Emotional outbursts
- Memory deficits
- Loss of consciousness

### Later Signs of Concussion (within hours to days)

- Persistent headache
- Dizziness/vertigo
- Poor concentration
- Memory dysfunction
- Loss of sense of taste or smell
- Sleep disturbances
- Intolerance of bright lights or loud noises
- Depression, Fatigue
- Irritability, Anxiety

Preventing concussion requires playing safe and ensuring that proper equipment is worn at all times. Athletes should not return to play until a doctor has determined that there has been a complete recovery

*References available upon request*



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**FOOTBALL  
INJURIES**