

RUGBY INJURIES

Play smart
Play safe!



As many as 1 in 4 rugby players will be injured during the season.

On average each player performs 20-40 tackles per match.

Almost 25% of neck injuries occur when there is a mismatch in experience between the two opposing front rows.

A lower ranked or less skilled team within the division, a forward position, being tackled, and beginning of the fall or spring season are identified as risk factors for rugby injuries.

Facts on Rugby Injuries

Rugby is a fast-moving and high intensity team sport. Although historically dominated by males, the sport is gaining popularity among female athletes, particularly at the high school and collegiate levels.

How often do injuries occur?

- Rugby injury rates are reported to be nearly three times higher than soccer and football.
- Most injuries are experienced by youth aged 10-18 years, and over 90% of these injuries are to boys.
- Adults aged 25–34 years of age have also been found to be at high risk.

- In the backs, wings, fullbacks and centres are at the highest risk of injury.
- In the scrum, the locks are at greatest risk of facial cuts and cauliflower ear (*external deformity to the ear caused by repeated blows*).
- Players in rucks and mauls commonly suffer injuries to fingers and thumbs as well as abrasions and lacerations from cleats.

When do injuries occur?

- More injuries occur during matches (57%) than in training, and more often in the 2nd half of the game.
- Approximately half of all injuries occur while a player is tackling or being tackled.

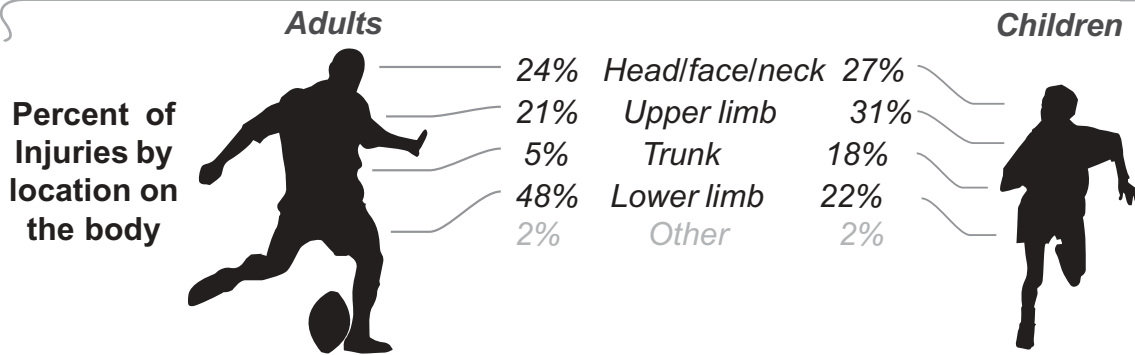
What kinds of injuries occur?

- Over 40% of injuries are muscular strains or contusions (*bruising*), 30% are sprains, followed by dislocations, fractures, lacerations, and overuse injuries.
- Sprained and strained ankles are a common injury with ankle sprains representing almost 1 in 7 rugby injuries.
- Between 5-25% of rugby injuries are head injuries, including concussions.
- In youth aged 10-18 years, 35% of injuries are fractures, of which 24% involve the clavicle. Superficial injuries represent 20% of rugby injuries, followed by head injuries and sprains (16%). Of the head injuries, 44% are concussions.

Who gets injured?

- Hookers and flankers sustain the most injuries.
- Forwards are more frequently injured than backs because of their greater involvement in physical collisions and tackles.





SAFETY & PREVENTION

Preparation is important

- More injuries occur at the beginning of a season, suggesting that pre-season conditioning could reduce injuries.
- A pre-season conditioning program should gradually increase in intensity and duration to prepare athletes for competition.
- Injury prevention strategies to reduce the incidence, severity and cost of rugby injuries could include coaching on defensive skills, correct tackling technique, correct falling technique and methods to minimize the absorption of impact forces in tackles.

Rugby equipment and environment

- All players must have equipment that is properly fitted and maintained.
- All playing fields must be well maintained and clear of debris and spectators.
- The use of mouthguards appears to lower the risk of orofacial injury.
- Padded headgear tends to prevent damage to the scalp and ears.
- Support sleeves tend to reduce the risk of sprains and strains.



Coaches & Parents

- Certification and continuing education is essential for all coaches and officials to inform them of new injury prevention information.
- Only more experienced players should play the front row positions that require significant practice to master the skills of scrummaging and tackling.
- Coaches can teach game-specific attacking and defensive drills that may reduce injuries. Practicing these skills may encourage players to make better decisions during matches.
- To reduce scrummaging injuries at lower rugby levels, props should crouch, touch, pause and then engage. This technique is called *Depowering the Scrum*. Another alternative is *Sequential Engagement* where the front rows engage first and then the second row joins in, so that a stable scrum is established.
- Referees should pay particular attention to scrummaging and take an active role to prevent situations that may result in a collapsed scrum.

Recommended Rugby Websites:

www.rugbycanada.ca
All you need to know about rugby risk and safety management.

www.bcrugby.com
Information on "Staying Healthy & Playing Safely"

www.irb.org
The International Rugby Board is the world-governing and law-making body for the game of rugby.

This factsheet is produced by The British Columbia Injury Research and Prevention Unit (BCIRPU), who 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.

