

# LACROSSE SAFETY

A GUIDE TO INJURY PREVENTION

SCOTTISH RITE  
FOR CHILDREN  
SPORTS MEDICINE

Lacrosse is one of the oldest sports in North America and is also one of the fastest growing sports in the United States. In 2021, there were more than 40,000 collegiate and more than 450,000 youth lacrosse players. Boys' and girls' lacrosse follow different rules and require different equipment which, among other factors, may impact the types of injuries seen in these young athletes.

## COMMON LACROSSE INJURIES:

### CONCUSSIONS

Concussions in girls' lacrosse players are often the result of stick contact, or a blow with a stick to the head. Boys' lacrosse has a higher risk for concussion due to player-to-player contact. An athlete with any concussion symptoms, including change in behavior, thinking or performance after a collision or a blow to the head, neck or body, **should be removed from play immediately** and not return to play the same day. A medical professional with experience managing concussions should determine when it is safe to return to play.

### ANKLE INJURIES

In lacrosse, sudden direction changes, stepping on another player's foot or landing from a jump can result in an ankle injury. Ankle sprains and injuries to the growth plate are common injuries in growing athletes that should be evaluated.

### KNEE INJURIES

Sudden changes in direction, stopping and jumping can place a lot of stress on the knee. This can stretch and tear ligaments, such as the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and medial collateral ligament (MCL). A swollen knee is a sign of a joint injury that needs to be evaluated.

### BACK AND CHEST INJURIES

Player-to-player collisions or falls may cause back injuries. Powerful and repetitive rotation while running, cradling, shooting and passing is more likely to cause activity-related pain in lacrosse. Overuse injuries, such as stress fractures (spondylolysis) are also common in young athletes. Persistent back pain from overuse injuries needs to be evaluated by a medical professional.

The equipment and high-speed movements in lacrosse increases the risk of a rare injury from a direct blow to the chest from the ball, a stick or player collisions. The condition, called commotio cordis, can be life-threatening. Chest protectors may reduce the impact and risk of this injury.



*This material is for informational purposes only. It does not replace the advice or counsel of a health care professional.*

## HAND AND WRIST INJURIES

Body checks, stick checks and slashing may cause hand and wrist injuries. Soft tissue injuries such as ligament sprains may heal with rest and ice. Some injuries may need a brace or other treatment.

## SHOULDER INJURIES

The design of lacrosse protective gear allows the arm to move freely but leaves the shoulder open to injury. Clavicle (collar bone) fractures and ligament injuries, or “separated shoulders,” may occur. A change in the appearance of the shoulder, pain, swelling or limited motion after a collision or fall should be evaluated.

## PREVENTING LACROSSE INJURIES:

### EQUIPMENT

Protective gear that meets standards and fits correctly will provide the most benefit. Poor-fitting equipment may not offer the same protection or support.

### DYNAMIC WARM-UP

A dynamic warm-up involves continuous movement to raise the body’s core temperature in preparation for training or competition. Perform this before each practice or game to increase elasticity in the muscles, tendons and ligaments around the joints.



### HYDRATION

Mild dehydration can worsen performance. Ideally, players should drink water every 15 to 20 minutes. Add a sports drink during intense activities lasting longer than one hour or in very hot environments to replace electrolytes lost through sweat.

### SPORT SPECIALIZATION, REST AND CROSS-TRAINING

Early sport specialization increases an athlete’s risk of injury and inhibits their athletic development. Focusing on one sport at an early age may lead to movement imbalances, an increased risk of injury and overtraining. A one- or two-month break between seasons and a day or two of rest each week in-season is recommended.

### SCOTTISH RITE WORKS TO HELP PREVENT SPORTS INJURIES BEFORE THEY HAPPEN

The Center for Excellence in Sports Medicine at Scottish Rite for Children is a comprehensive practice specializing in the treatment of sport-related injuries and conditions in young and growing athletes.

Preventing an injury before it happens is ideal. To help, Scottish Rite has created a Bridge Program that is appropriate for patients transitioning from formal physical therapy after an injury or surgery, as well as those who have never been injured.

Our strength and conditioning coaches lead group training sessions designed to teach proper movement patterns and build strength, speed and agility which can reduce the risk of many common injuries.



Sign up for the Bridge Program. New classes starting monthly. | [scottishriteforchildren.org/bridge](https://scottishriteforchildren.org/bridge)

