

## **Play Hockey, Safely**

Hockey is part of our Canadian culture. This sport is great for the cardiovascular system, increases physical endurance all while being great fun! To practice this activity safely, here are some tips to help avoid injuries.

### **Carrying your equipment**

You know that stinky bag? Often heavy, it must be carried with a great deal of care. To lift it, bend your knees and keep your back straight. Avoid swinging the bag onto your shoulder as this creates rotation and flexion and provokes tension on ligaments, muscles and inter-vertebral discs which may lead to a lumbar strain. Bags with wheels are ideal. If you don't have one, carry it like a backpack instead of resting the entire weight of the bag on one shoulder.

### **Warm-up on Ice**

Crucial, the warm up stimulates the body and puts it in motion. Take 5 to 10 minutes to circle the rink. Work each joint separately by doing rotations for 15 to 60 seconds. The most important joints are the shoulders, wrists, ankles, knees, hips, low-back and neck.

### **Good Hydration**

Skating for an hour really works up a sweat. It is very important to drink lots to replenish the fluids lost in action. Drink lots before, during and after the game. A teaspoon each of salt and sugar in a litre of water will help replace lost minerals.

### **A few Minutes of Stretching**

After the game, take a few minutes to stretch. Your body is well warmed-up so there is less chances of muscle injury. Stretching will help eliminate the build-up of toxins and will speed up recovery while minimizing aches and pains.

Here are a few stretches:

- **Quads:** While standing, bend your knee and grab your ankle. Keep your back straight while bringing your foot to your buttock. You should feel a nice stretch

in the front of your thigh. Hold this position for 10 seconds. Repeat twice with each leg. You may touch a wall to keep your balance.



- **Glutes:** Sitting on the floor, your left leg straight in front of you. Bend the right knee and place your foot on the outside of your left knee. Use both hands to slowly push your knee further towards your left shoulder. Keep your back straight, and you should feel the stretch in your right glutes. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat twice and switch legs.



- **Hips:** While on your back, bend your left hip at a 90 degree angle. Put your right foot on your left knee. Using your hands, pull your left thigh towards you. You should feel a nice stretch on the outside of your hip. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat twice while switching legs.



### **What about Prevention?**

Injuries to the spine and extremities are common in hockey. Muscles that are in shape can help prevent these injuries but other risk factors must be considered. The hockey player's position, which is slightly bent forward, puts constant stress on the lower back and hips. Also, falls on ice, checks and movements of torsion can lead to back injuries. It is important to do muscle strengthening exercises; a health professional can recommend specific exercises for your condition. A screening exam can detect certain neuro-musculo-skeletal dysfunctions before they become a problem. Don't wait until you hurt yourself... And never forget to have a nice posture... even while watching the game from your couch!