

GET A HEADS UP ON Hockey Helmet Safety



While there is no concussion-proof helmet, a hockey helmet can help protect your athlete from a serious brain or head injury. The information in this handout will help you learn what to look for, and what to avoid when picking out a helmet for your hockey player.

Start with the Right Size:

BRING THE ATHLETE

Bring your athlete with you when buying a new helmet to make sure that you can check for a good fit.

HEAD SIZE

To find out the size of your athlete's head, wrap a soft tape measure around the athlete's head, just above their eyebrows and ears. Make sure the tape measure stays level from front to back. (If you don't have a soft tape measure, you can use a string and then measure it against a ruler.)

SIZES WILL VARY

Helmet sizes often will vary from brand-to-brand and with different models. Each helmet will fit differently, so it is important to check out the manufacturer's website for the helmet brand's fit instructions and sizing charts, as well as to find out what helmet size fits your athlete's head size.

Get a Good Fit:

GENERAL FIT

A hockey helmet should fit snugly all around, with no spaces between the pads and the athlete's head. You can check this by seeing if the skin on the athlete's forehead moves when the helmet is shifted left or right, up or down. Always follow the manufacturer's fitting instructions.

ASK

Ask your athlete how the helmet feels on their head. While it needs to have a snug fit, a helmet that is too tight can cause headaches.

HAIRSTYLE

Your child or teen should try on the helmet with the hairstyle he or she will wear while at practices and games. Helmet fit can change if your athlete's hairstyle changes. For example, a long-haired athlete who gets a very short haircut may need to adjust the fit of the helmet.

COVERAGE

A hockey helmet should not sit too high or too low on their head. To check, make sure that the rim of the helmet is one finger width above the eyebrow and the helmet sits flat on the top of the athlete's head.

CAGE OR FACE MASK

A cage or facemask that fits well should not be more than an inch from the athlete's face. The chin cup should be centered under the athlete's chin and fit snugly. The cage or facemask may be a different size than the helmet.

THROAT PROTECTOR

A throat protector or neck guard should fit snugly and should completely cover the athlete's throat.

VISION

Make sure you can see your athlete's eyes and that he or she can see straight forward and side-to-side.

CHIN STRAPS

Be sure there is a four-point chin-strap attached to the helmet. The chin strap should be centered under the athlete's chin and fit snugly. Tell your athlete to open their mouth wide...big yawn! The helmet should pull down on their head. If not, the chin strap needs to be tighter. Once the chin strap is fastened, the helmet should not easily move in any direction, back-to-front or side-to-side. For helmets with a four point chin strap system, all four straps must be snapped and tightened as part of the fitting process.

Take Care of the Helmet:

Athletes should NOT attempt to make any helmet or faceguard repairs themselves.

CHECK FOR DAMAGE

DO NOT allow your athlete to use a cracked or broken helmet, or a helmet that is missing any padding or parts. Check for missing or loose parts and padding before the season and regularly during the season.

CLEANING

Clean the helmet often inside and out with warm water and mild detergent. DO NOT soak any part of the helmet, put it close to high heat, or use strong cleaners.

PROTECT

DO NOT let anyone sit or lean on the helmet.

STORAGE

Do not store a hockey helmet in a car. The helmet should be stored in a room that does not get too hot or too cold, and where the helmet is away from direct sunlight.

DECORATION

DO NOT decorate (paint or put stickers on) the helmet without checking with the helmet manufacturer, as this may affect the safety of the helmet. This information may also be found on the instructions label or on the manufacturer's website.

Look for the Labels:

LOOK FOR A HOCKEY HELMET WITH LABELS THAT:

- Say "MEETS NOCSAE Standard®"¹ as certified either by the manufacturer or by SEI². That label means that the helmet model has been tested and meets NOCSAE performance and protection standards.
- State whether the helmet can be recertified. If not, look for the label that specifies when the certification to the NOCSAE standard expires.
- Specify how frequently the helmet must be reconditioned and recertified.
- Have the date of manufacture. This information will be helpful if the manufacturer has: specified a useful life of the helmet; specified that the helmet may not be reconditioned and recertified; or if there is ever a recall on that particular model or year.

Know When to Replace a Hockey Helmet:

RECONDITIONING

Reconditioning involves having an expert inspect and repair a used helmet by: fixing cracks or damage, replacing missing parts, testing it for safety, and recertifying it for use. Helmets should be reconditioned regularly by a licensed NAERA³ member.

DO NOT allow your athlete to use a used helmet that is not approved/recertified for use by a NAERA reconditioner.

For a complete list of licensed recertifiers, visit the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS): www.nfhs.org/media/1018157/4-20-2017_nocsae_reconditioners.pdf.

"Only companies that are licensed by NOCSAE® can recertify a helmet. All NAERA members are licensed by NOCSAE®".

10 AND OUT

Hockey helmets should be replaced no later than 10 years from the date of manufacture. Many helmets will need to be replaced sooner, depending upon wear and tear.



¹ National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment: www.nocsae.org

² Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) is an independent and nationally accredited certification body: www.seinet.org

³ National Athletic Reconditioning Association: www.naera.net