



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Mandatory Helmet Use for Skating At Dalhousie Memorial Arena

As of January 1, 2010, Dalhousie Memorial Arena will require participants of all ages to wear CSA-approved hockey helmets during all skating sessions.

Why helmets for skating?

Skating is a wonderful activity for all levels of sport and recreation. However, skaters are at high risk for potential head injury due to the combination of being on a hard surface, while balancing on a thin skate blade. The slippery surface of the ice also makes it very difficult to break a fall with one's hands; therefore a skater's head is more likely to hit the ice surface during a fall.

Anatomically speaking, our skull is quite thin in places, as thin as two pennies stacked. Inside the skull our brain has a very soft, Jell-o like consistency. The skull can be fractured and the brain bruised relatively easily during a fall due to their delicate natures. The chance of a fractured skull and/or bruising of the brain is increased significantly when falling on a very hard ice surface.

How does a helmet work?

Helmets provide a protective layer for our thin skull. As well, helmets are designed to create a surface area to absorb the force that the skull and brain would otherwise accept during a fall.

Whose idea was this?

Wearing a helmet for skating is not a new idea. The decision to make helmets mandatory for skating was based on clinical cases of preventable brain injury from people skating without helmets. Mandating helmet use while skating at Dalhousie is being pursued as your health and safety is our top priority. This is a collaborative initiative with the Division of Neurosurgery at the QEII Health Sciences Centre and the Department of Athletics & Recreational Services at Dalhousie University.

How many injuries have there been at the Dalhousie Memorial Arena?

Two serious brain injuries have been documented that can be attributed to skating without helmets at the Dalhousie arena. There have also been other falls and collisions which have resulted in less severe injuries. It is fair to assume that there have been other unreported injuries as well.

I'm a figure skater and I've never had to wear a helmet before. Why do I have to wear one now?

This policy currently applies to public skates and ice rentals at Dalhousie Memorial Arena. If you are a figure skater and choose to participate in a public skate or rent the ice, you will be required to wear a CSA-approved hockey helmet.

How far will you take this whole safety thing? Are you going to make it mandatory to wear helmets for soccer now?

No. There are currently no helmets for soccer. Concussions however are a concern for all sports. We continue to work with the Division of Neurosurgery on concussion education sessions for our varsity trainers and coaches.

As adults, don't you think we should be responsible for our own health and well being and be able to make our own choices?

Responsibility means being aware of the risks and protecting yourself accordingly. Helmets are known to be 85% effective in preventing and reducing the severity of brain injury. Most people have never been forced to experience seeing a loved one who has suffered injury to the brain. Those who have firsthand knowledge of the severity of brain injury and the resulting consequences are generally very willing to wear helmets for any activity.

A brain injury has the potential to change what makes YOU who YOU are. Concussion and mild brain injury can have *lifelong consequences* such as: *fatigue, poor memory, chronic headaches and reading/writing difficulties*. We want to prevent any unnecessary suffering for you and your family by making helmets for skating mandatory.

So what is the big deal around brain injuries and falls?

Brain injuries are a big deal because they are permanent injuries with lifelong consequences for both the patient and the family. A broken bone can heal in about six weeks. The brain, on the other hand, is made of specialized tissues which recover slowly and do not regenerate after permanent injury. *Areas of the brain that can become permanently damaged include your sight, hearing, speech and personality*. Even a 'mild' brain injury more than doubles someone's long-term risk for developing epilepsy.

In Canada, injury results in over three million emergency room visits, accounts for \$10.7 billion in health care costs and \$19.8 billion in total economic costs per year.

Falls account for 50% of all injuries resulting in admission to hospitals. Falls are the leading cause of overall injury costs. In 2004, falls cost Canadians \$6.2 billion.

Nova Scotia has the highest death rate due to falls in Canada. At the IWK Health Centre, 68% of head injuries in skaters happened in rinks, and 75% occurred during recreational activity.

Where can I get more information?

www.thinkfirst.ca

Where can I register my feedback ?

It is understandable that there will be varying points of view on this initiative. While this initiative has been well received by many there will be those who do not agree with it. Dalhousie University's Department of Athletics & Recreational Services values the opinions of its patrons. Feedback can be sent to comments@dal.ca

Dalhousie University's Department of Athletics & Recreational Services has your health and safety as our top priority!

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