

**Mayo Clinic News Network**

**Title: Play a 'heads-up' game for better hockey safety** Date: October 19, 2017

Intro: More than a half million kids play hockey in the U.S., and there’s an ongoing effort to keep them from getting hurt. The national governing body for the sport, [USA Hockey](#), places a priority on educating players, coaches and parents on how to enjoy the sport safely.

[Dr. Michael Stuart](#), a [Mayo Clinic](#) orthopedic surgeon, is the organization's chief medical officer. ['Heads Up, Don't Duck'](#) remains a very important initiative for USA Hockey," says Dr. Stuart, citing a successful part of a training program to help players avoid concussions and spinal cord injuries. Dennis Doua reports for the Mayo Clinic News Network.

**Video**

**Audio**

<b>Video</b>	<b>Audio</b>
<b>Total running time [0:00]</b>	/// VIDEO
<b>Dennis Doua speaking</b>	Hockey is a fast, powerful and physical game. Experts say there’s no reason those very elements that make it fun to watch, should also make it more risky to play than other sports.
<b>TITLE: Michael Stuart, M.D. Orthopedic surgery Mayo Clinic</b>	<b>“The bottom line is: Changing behavior is probably the most effective strategy of all.”</b>
<b>Dennis Doua speaking</b>	Mayo Clinic Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. Michael Stuart is also co-director of Mayo’s Sports Medicine Center. And, as chief medical officer for USA Hockey, he helped design a new video and training program to prevent the most feared of all hockey injuries; a broken neck or permanent spinal cord damage.
<b>Dr. Michael Stuart speaking</b>	<b>“So the premise of this program is, if a player is going to collide with the boards, try to hit the boards with any part of your body other than your head.”</b>
<b>Dennis Doua speaking</b>	Called "Heads Up, Don't Duck," the program promotes drills that condition players to automatically choose the safest posture for impact.
<b>Dr. Michael Stuart speaking</b>	<b>“When your head is up, the normal curvature, called the lordosis of the spine, protects it, because it has more shock absorbing ability.”</b>
<b>Dennis Doua speaking</b>	It also illustrates how hitting the boards with the head down could be catastrophic.
<b>Dr. Michael Stuart speaking</b>	<b>“Then you get that accordion effect, and those vertebrae are much more</b>

	<p><b>susceptible to fracture or dislocation, which can then damage the spinal cord. But we also teach on-ice awareness. Be aware of your surroundings. Be prepared to take a check so you're in a safe position."</b></p>
<b>Dennis Douda speaking</b>	<p>Dr. Stuart believes neck flexibility and strengthening exercises may further protect players.</p>
<b>Dr. Michael Stuart speaking</b>	<p><b>"So that maybe you can better absorb forces, protect the neck, and possibly even protect the brain from concussion."</b></p>
<b>Dennis Douda speaking</b>	<p>"Heads Up, Don't Duck": four words to keep a player in the game. For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Dennis Douda.</p>

**Anchor tag:** "Heads Up, Don't Duck" was first launched several years ago after seven players suffered severe neck injuries in a single season – five of which involved spinal cord damage.