

# Boxing participation by children and adolescents

A joint statement with the American Academy of Pediatrics

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## ABSTRACT

Thousands of boys and girls younger than 19 years of age participate in boxing in North America. Although boxing provides benefits for participants, including exercise, self-discipline and self-confidence, the sport of boxing encourages and rewards deliberate blows to the head and face. Participants in boxing are at risk of head, face and neck injuries, including chronic and even fatal neurological injuries. Concussions are one of the most common injuries occurring in boxing. Because of the risk of head and facial injuries, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics vigorously oppose boxing as a sport for children and adolescents. These organizations recommend that physicians oppose boxing in youth and encourage patients to participate in alternative sports in which intentional head blows are not central to the sport.

**Key Words:** Adolescents; Boxing; Children; Chronic traumatic brain injury; Chronic traumatic encephalopathy; Concussion; Head injuries; Youth

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Canadian Paediatric Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that paediatricians:

- Vigorously oppose boxing as a sport for any child or adolescent;
- Educate patients who may be engaged in or considering engaging in boxing, as well as their parents/caregivers/teachers/coaches, about the medical risks of boxing;
- Encourage young athletes to participate in alternative sports in which intentional blows to the head are not central to the sport, such as swimming, tennis, basketball and volleyball; and
- Advocate that boxing organizations ensure that appropriate medical care is provided for children and adolescents who choose to participate in boxing, ideally including medical coverage at events, preparticipation medical examinations, and regular neurocognitive testing and ophthalmological examinations.

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