

Lawn bowls - preventing injury

Lawn bowls is ranked the fifth most popular sport and physical activity in Australia. More than three quarters of players are over 55 years of age, and falls are the most frequent cause of injury. Other injuries that may occur include fractures, strains and sprains.

As well as being a great form of physical activity, lawn bowls is also a wonderful social activity. You can meet more people in your local area and make new friends. People who take part in lawn bowls develop skills and coordination, which not only improves their fitness but also helps their confidence and self esteem.

However, as with all sports, it's important to know how to prevent injury.

Risk factors for injury

Some of the factors that can increase your risk of injury include:

- **Incorrect technique** - using the correct swinging action when bowling is an important factor in preventing injury. Poor delivery or balance, or incorrect grip of the bowl can lead to injury.
- **Failure to warm up and cool down** - warming up and cooling down is extremely important to reduce the risk of muscle and joint injuries.
- **Time spent playing** - the repetitive movements associated with bowling can be associated with injury. Make sure you rest between games.
- **Previous injury** - lawn bowls can aggravate existing injury make sure injuries are fully rehabilitated before play.

General health and safety suggestions

Some suggestions and tips:

- If you have a medical condition, are overweight, are over 40 years old or haven't exercised regularly, see your doctor for a check-up.
- Take lessons from a qualified coach to develop adequate skills and technique.
- Good preparation is important. Warm up and stretch before play to improve joint range of movement, promote elasticity of tendons and ligaments, and prevent muscular strain.
- Cool down after play to prevent stiffness and cardiovascular complications.
- Be sunsmart. Wear a 30+ sunscreen on exposed skin and a broad-brimmed hat.
- Avoid playing lawn bowls in extreme weather conditions.
- Drink water before, during and after activity to keep hydrated.

Good technique and practices will prevent injury

- Ensure correct technique - poor delivery or balance or incorrect grip of the bowl can lead to injury.
- Undertake balance training and exercises to strengthen the lower extremities, back and neck to help prevent falls.
- Use trolleys to avoid lifting the bowls bag.
- Ensure adequate rest between games.
- Carry a mobile phone, whenever possible, in case of emergency.

Use appropriate equipment

- Seek professional advice when you choose bowls to make sure they are the correct size. This will help to improve your technique and prevent injury.
- Seek professional advice when purchasing footwear.
- Change footwear to shoes with grip soles when stepping off the green.
- Use non-slip bowling mats with significant grip on the top surface to allow traction between the shoe and mat.

What to do if an injury occurs

- Stop immediately if an injury occurs to help prevent any further damage.
- Seek first aid or prompt medical treatment of an injury. This is important for all injured players - no matter how severe (or seemingly insignificant) the injury is. At least one trained first aid person should be on duty at all bowls events.
- Make sure the bowls club has a well-stocked first aid kit, a telephone and emergency contact numbers on display.
- Don't resume play until you are completely recovered from any injury.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Always call an ambulance in an emergency Tel. 000
- Physiotherapist
- Smartplay Tel. (03) 9674 8777

Things to remember

- Ensure correct technique because poor delivery or balance, or incorrect grip of the bowl, can lead to injury.
- Seek professional advice when selecting bowls to ensure bowls are the correct size - this will help improve technique and prevent injury.
- Seek prompt treatment of injury. Early management will mean less time away from your sport or activity.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Smartplay

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