

## Lawn bowls - health benefits

Lawn bowls is a precision sport in which the goal is to roll slightly asymmetrical balls (called bowls) closer to a smaller white ball (the 'jack') than your opponent is able to do. Related to bocce and pétanque, this game is a popular sport and leisure activity in Australia. In fact, an estimated 296,000 Australian men and women play bowls.

Lawn bowls is played for the challenge and competition, personal enjoyment, activity, the pleasure of spending time outdoors and for social interaction. It is also a low impact, therapeutic form of exercise.

### Health benefits

Health professionals recommend playing bowls, particularly for older people, as it provides a number of health benefits, including:

- Improved fitness
- Improved coordination and skill development
- Increased confidence and self-esteem
- Enhanced mental wellbeing
- Low risk physical activity, because it is low impact
- Social contact, because it's a great way to keep in touch with friends
- Community connectedness and support.

### Getting started

Because of its relaxed pace and comparatively light physical demands, lawn bowls is a popular participant sport, particularly for the elderly. There is also a considerable professional competition dominated by younger men and women.

A good way to get started is to join a local club or start playing socially. However, you don't always need to join a club to play bowls. A new phenomenon is 'barefoot bowls', where established clubs have opened their greens to paying customers who rent rinks and bowls for limited time. It's popular with the 20–30 years age group, who enjoy the social, informal structure. It can be a good way to become familiar with the sport.

### Preventing injury

Falls are the most frequent cause of injuries in lawn bowls. Other common causes are overexertion and being struck by a bowl. The repetitive movement of bowling is also associated with overuse injury. Common injuries are strains, sprains and fractures. Some tips to avoid injuries include:

- See your doctor for a check-up if you have a medical condition, are overweight, are over 40 years old or haven't exercised regularly.
- Warm up and stretch before play to improve joint range of motion, promote elasticity of tendons and ligaments, and prevent muscular strain.
- Cool down after play to prevent stiffness and cardiovascular complications.
- Take lessons from a qualified coach to develop skills and technique.
- Practise correct technique because poor delivery or balance, or incorrect grip of the bowl, can lead to injury.
- Use a trolley if you experience difficulty lifting a bowls bag.
- Seek professional advice when selecting bowls to ensure they are the correct size, to improve technique and prevent injury.
- Wear grip sole shoes when stepping off the green.

- Be sunsmart. Wear 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.

## Where to get help

- Your local council
- Local lawn bowls club
- Smartplay Tel. (03) 9674 8777

## Things to remember

- Lawn bowls is a low impact, therapeutic exercise that can improve fitness, coordination and confidence.
- Consider lessons to develop adequate skills and technique.
- Warm up and stretch before and cool down after play.

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

Smartplay

Content on this website is provided for education and information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not imply endorsement and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. Content has been prepared for Victorian residents and wider Australian audiences, and was accurate at the time of publication. Readers should note that, over time, currency and completeness of the information may change. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions.

For the latest updates and more information, visit [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

**Copyright** © 1999/2012 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel ([www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.