

Soccer - preventing injury

Soccer is one of the world's largest participation sports. The sport involves accelerating, decelerating, jumping, cutting, pivoting, turning, heading and kicking the ball. Soccer places many demands on the technical and physical skills of the player and, as a result, injuries can and do occur.

Common injuries

The most common types of injuries sustained in soccer are bruising, sprains, strains, fractures and dislocations. Injuries to the lower body (ankle and knee) are most common, followed by the upper body and head.

Common causes of injuries are player contact, falls and tackles. Many injuries are caused by foul play.

Preventing injury

To prevent injury, you should:

- Be prepared
- Use good technique and practices
- Wear the right protective gear
- Check the gear and the environment
- Know yourself and the sport.

Be prepared

Get off to a good start. Suggestions include:

- Train before the season starts to ensure you are ready for competition. Gradually increase the intensity and duration of training.
- Undertake fitness programs to develop endurance, strength, balance, coordination and flexibility.
- Develop individual and team skills, with guidance from your coach, before you play in competitive situations.
- Warm up, stretch and cool down every time you play.

Use good technique and practices

Suggestions include:

- Know the rules and play fairly.
- Get instruction on correct kicking, heading and tackling techniques.
- Make sure coaches undertake regular re-accreditation and education to ensure their knowledge is up to date.
- Use accredited umpires and stick to the rules to decrease the risk of contact and injury.

Wear the right protective gear

Suggestions include:

- Wear a mouthguard, preferably custom-fitted, at all times.
- Wear shock absorbent shin guards at all times. Seek professional advice on the correct fitting of shin guards.
- Consider preventive ankle taping or bracing to reduce risk of injury.
- Seek professional advice on footwear.

Check the gear and the environment

Suggestions include:

- Check and maintain the playing surface to remove hazards.
- Replace balls once their water-resistant qualities are lost.
- Use appropriate sized balls for the age and gender of players.
- Make sure both permanent and portable goals are securely anchored to the ground.
- Make sure portable goals are made of lightweight material.
- Dismantle, remove or secure portable goals to a permanent structure after use.

Know yourself and the sport

Suggestions include:

- Choose activities that are suited to your fitness level.
- Follow the rules and play fairly.
- Know and use the right techniques.

Other safety tips

Remember to:

- Drink water before, during and after play.
- Make sure qualified first aid personnel, first aid kits, icepacks and a stretcher are available at all times.
- Check that there is telephone access, to contact emergency services.

Respond promptly to injuries

If you or someone else is injured:

- Injured or bleeding players should be removed from the field immediately.
- Seek prompt attention from qualified first aid personnel.
- Make sure you are fully rehabilitated before returning to play.
- Wear a support aid like an ankle brace for at least three months after serious ankle injury.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Always call triple zero for an ambulance in an emergency Tel. 000
- Physiotherapist
- Smartplay Tel. (03) 9674 8777
- Standards Australia's Handbook, *Portable Soccer Goalposts – Manufacture, Use and Storage* (HB 227:2003), aims to prevent deaths and serious injury occurring from soccer goalposts. To order a copy visit www.standards.org.au
- Some moveable goal posts are now banned for sale in Victoria. Visit www.consumer.vic.gov.au for further information.

Things to remember

- Common causes of injuries to soccer players are player contact, falls and tackles.
- Being physically ready to play and using the right techniques and equipment for the sport can help prevent injury.
- Always call triple zero for an ambulance in an emergency Tel. 000

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

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