

## Australian rules football - preventing injury

Australian rules football is one of the most popular sports for players and spectators in Australia. This very physical contact sport often results in injuries from tackling, kicking, running, handballing, marking and constant physical competition for the ball.

### Common injuries

Common causes of football injuries are being tackled, hit by another player, hit by the ball and falls. Injuries to the thigh, knee, lower leg and ankle are the most common non-hospital-treated injuries. Hospital-treated injuries, (which make up 40 per cent of football injuries) are usually wrist, hand, finger and forearm fractures, dislocations and sprains. Overuse injuries occur frequently among higher level and older players.

### Preventing injury

To prevent injury you should:

- Be prepared
- Provide a safe environment
- Wear the right protective gear.

### Be prepared

Remember to:

- Train before the season so your body is ready to compete. Pre-season training can improve strength, flexibility, stamina, agility and balance.
- Learn, practise and use correct skills and techniques before playing.
- Do a complete warm up, including stretching, slow jogging and running activities, with and without a football.
- Eat a balanced, nutritional diet.
- Drink water before, during and after a game or training session.
- Avoid drinking alcohol 48 hours before a game and straight after a game.

### Provide a safe environment

Suggestions include:

- Check the ground to remove or cover hazardous objects, such as broken glass or sprinkler heads.
- Make sure fences are a minimum of three metres from the boundary line.
- Ensure goalposts are padded with high-density foam, at least two metres high and 35 millimetres thick. Padding should be in good condition and replaced when worn or damaged.
- Make sure qualified first aid personnel, first aid kits, icepacks and a stretcher are available at all times.
- Check that telephone access, to contact emergency services, is available.

### Wear the right protective gear

Make sure you:

- Wear a mouthguard, preferably custom-fitted, at all times.
- Wear protective headgear, ankle braces and thigh protectors if you have a history of head, ankle or thigh injuries.
- Seek professional advice about the most appropriate boots to wear for playing conditions.
- Wear sunscreen and re-apply during breaks on sunny days.

## If injury occurs

If you or someone else is injured:

- Seek prompt attention from qualified first aid personnel for any injuries.
- Return to the field after injury only after a health professional decides it is safe.
- Make sure you are fully rehabilitated before returning to play after injury.

## Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Sports physician
- Physiotherapist
- Australian Physiotherapy Association Tel. (03) 9092 0888
- Always call triple zero for an ambulance in an emergency Tel. 000
- Smartplay Tel. (03) 9674 8777

## Things to remember

- Australian rules football is a very physical contact sport that can result in injuries from tackling, kicking, running, handballing, marking and constant physical competition.
- Common causes of football injuries are being tackled, hit by another player, hit by the ball and falls.
- Being physically prepared and using the right techniques can help prevent injury.

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

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