
Lawn bowls - health benefits

Summary

- 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.
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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.

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, there were 245,000 adults aged 15 years and over participating in lawn bowls in 2012.

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 of lawn bowls

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
- community connectedness and support.

Getting started with lawn bowls

Because of its relaxed pace and comparatively light physical demands, lawn bowls is a popular participant sport, particularly for older people. There are also professional competitions that are popular with younger players.

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 great way to be introduced to the sport is 'barefoot bowls', where clubs open their greens to paying customers who rent rinks and bowls for social play. 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.

Pre-exercise screening is used to identify people with medical conditions that may put them at a higher risk of a experiencing a health problem during physical activity. It is a filter or 'safety net' to help decide if the potential benefits of exercise outweigh the risks for you. Print a copy of the [pre-exercise screening tool](#) and discuss it with your doctor or exercise professional.

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.
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- 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
- **Bowls Victoria** (03) 9861 7100

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