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Soccer - preventing injury

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Summary

- 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.



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 soccer injuries

The most common types of injuries sustained while playing 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.

Preventing injury while playing soccer

To prevent injury, you should:

- Be prepared.
- Use good technique and practices.
- Wear the right protective gear, including approved shin guards.
- Check the gear and the environment.
- Know yourself and the sport.

Preparing to play soccer

Get off to a good start. Suggestions include:

- Train before the season starts to make sure you are ready for competition. Gradually increase the intensity and duration of training.
- Undertake fitness programs to develop endurance, strength, balance, coordination and flexibility.
- Add injury prevention programmes to your training routine.
- 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 for soccer

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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 soccer 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 soccer gear and 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. To check the safety standards for these, visit [Product Safety Australia](#) on the ACCC website.

Know yourself and the sport of soccer

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 for playing soccer

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 soccer injuries

If you or someone else is injured, remember:

- Injured or bleeding players should be removed from the field immediately.
- Seek prompt attention from qualified first aid personnel.
- In the case of head injury or concussion, seek medical advice before returning to sport.
- Make sure you are fully rehabilitated before returning to play.
- Taping and bracing has been shown to reduce re-injury rates. Therefore you should seek advice as to whether taping or bracing may be appropriate for you, and if so continue to use it until advised otherwise.

Where to get help

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

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.

References

- Smartplay Victoria, *Drink up, beat the heat*, Sports Medicine Australia – Victoria. [More information here.](#)
- Smartplay Victoria, *Football (soccer)*, Sports Medicine Australia – Victoria. [More information here.](#)

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