

Other safety tips

- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Drink water before, during and after play.
- Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen when playing outdoors.
- Do NOT play in extreme heat, wet or slippery conditions.

If an injury occurs

- Injured or bleeding players should be removed from the field immediately.
- Injured players should seek prompt attention from qualified first aid personnel.
- Ensure players are fully rehabilitated before returning to play.
- An ankle brace should be worn for at least three months after serious ankle injury.



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References

Sherrard J, Cassell E. Systematic review of the effectiveness of strategies and measures to prevent community level soccer injuries. Monash University Accident Research Centre report to Sport and Recreation Victoria, June 2006.

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SMARTPLAY



Preventing Soccer Injuries



Facts and Safety
Tips for Soccer Players

Facts on soccer injuries

Soccer is one of the most popular team-based sports in Australia and worldwide.

Statistics from the Australian Sports Commission's 2004 survey showed an estimated 659,200 Australians aged 15 years and older played outdoor soccer in the 12-month period prior to being surveyed. A further 293,600 people played indoor soccer.

Soccer places many demands on the technical and physical skills of players. During the course of play, soccer players accelerate, decelerate, jump, cut, pivot, kick and head the ball and, as a result, injuries can and do occur.

How many injuries?

- From 2002-2004, 1,222 people were admitted to Victorian hospitals while 3,376 people visited emergency departments for soccer-related injuries.
- From 2002-2003, one in every 473 soccer players was admitted to hospital for a soccer-related injury.
- The rate of injury for soccer players is up to 35 injuries per 1,000 playing hours.

The causes and types of injuries

- More injuries occur during games than training.
- Up to 35% of injuries are caused by foul play.
- The most common types of injuries are bruising, sprains, strains, fractures and dislocations.
- Injuries to the lower body, namely the ankle and knee are most common, followed by the upper body and head.
- Common causes of injuries are player contact, falls and tackles.

Factors increasing your injury risk

- Previous injury.
- Age.
- Joint instability and pain.
- Poor physical conditioning.
- Inadequate rehabilitation.
- Exercise overload.
- Poor soccer skills.
- Amount and quality of training.
- Playing field conditions.
- Not wearing protective equipment.
- Rule violations.

Safety tips for soccer players

Good preparation is important

- Always warm up, stretch and cool down.
- Undertake training prior to competition to ensure readiness to play.
- Undertake fitness programs to develop endurance, strength, balance, coordination and flexibility.
- Gradually increase intensity and duration of training.

Good technique and practices will help prevent injury

- Know the rules and play fairly.
- Instruction on correct kicking, heading and tackling techniques must be available and reinforced.
- Coaches should undertake regular re-accreditation and education to ensure their knowledge is kept up-to-date.
- Officials should enforce game rules.



Use appropriate equipment and check pitch safety

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

Wear the right protective equipment

- 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.

Modify rules and equipment for children

- Encourage children to play Goalkick, Rooball and Football Anytime to develop good skills and technique.
- Children should head the ball with the proper technique and use the correct sized ball for their age and weight. Younger children should use softer balls (Nerf ball) to head the ball. Once confidence is built, a regulation ball (under-inflated at first) can be introduced.