

### Other safety tips

- Drink water before, during and after play.
- Play within your limits.
- Be sunsmart. Wear sun protective clothing, a hat, sunglasses and SPF 30+ sunscreen.
- Do NOT play in extreme weather conditions. Consult your state/territory Extreme Weather Policy for guidance.
- Qualified first aid personnel, first aid kits, ice packs and a stretcher should be available at all times.
- Telephone access, to contact emergency services, is essential.

### If an injury occurs

- Stop playing if you experience any injury or illness.
- Injured players should seek prompt attention from qualified first aid personnel or a sports medicine professional.
- Players should be fully rehabilitated before returning to play.



### For further information contact

**Smartplay – Sports Medicine Australia**  
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### References

For a full list of references, contact Smartplay.

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# Preventing Lawn Bowls Injuries



Facts and Safety Tips  
for Lawn Bowls

## Facts on lawn bowls injuries

Lawn bowls is a popular form of physical and social activity in Australia.

There are currently in excess of 250,000 registered lawn bowls members in Australia. However, the increase in popularity of social bowls has seen the number of participants increase to over 500,000 nationwide. The majority of players are male aged over 55 years of age.

Lawn bowls is a great way for people to develop their skills, coordination and fitness. It is a precision sport which involves players trying to roll their bowl closest to the white ball or yellow ball (called a jack or kitty). Despite the sport being non-contact, injuries can and do occur.

### How many injuries?

- Approximately one-fifth of hospital emergency department presentations resulting from lawn bowls injury require hospitalisation.
- In 2006, 37 people were admitted to hospitals while 8 people visited emergency departments for lawn bowls related injuries (in the state of Victoria alone).
- During this period, the hospitalisation rate was highest among those aged between 70 and 74 years.

### The causes and types of injuries

- Common causes of injuries are falls, overexertion, repetitive bowling movements and being struck by a bowl. Fall injuries usually occur when a player either falls backwards over a bowl; steps forward over the ditch, rather than sideways when crossing onto the green; or delivers a bowl with incorrect balance.
- The most common types of injuries are fractures, sprains and strains.
- Injuries to the hip, thigh, knee and lower leg are most common.

## Safety tips for lawn bowls

### Good preparation is important

- Avoid playing with a pre-existing illness or injury. If in doubt, talk to your doctor.
- 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.
- Undertake simple pre-season fitness testing to ensure you are fit for competition.
- Undertake balance training and exercises to strengthen the lower extremities, back and neck, to help prevent falls.

### Good technique and practices will help prevent injury

- Know the rules and play fairly.
- Seek instruction on correct techniques from an accredited coach to develop adequate skills and good game technique. Incorrect technique such as poor balance and delivery, or incorrect grip of the bowl, can lead to injury.
- Coaches should undertake regular reaccreditation and education to ensure their knowledge is kept up-to-date.



### Use appropriate equipment and make the environment safe

- Use non-slip bowling mats with significant grip on the top surface to allow traction between the shoe and mat.
- Those with physical restrictions should use a bowls trolley bag to avoid lifting bowls bags.
- Sheltered seating areas at the end of each green should be provided to use between play.
- Use a bowls lifter to lift bowls for delivery to ensure participants are not continually bending down.
- To prevent falls introduce hand rails around footpaths; footpaths free of cracks; anti-slip treatments on walking surfaces; good lighting at night games; and installation of ramps around the club and across the ditch.
- Ensure playing fields and facilities are well maintained and free of hazards.

### Modified equipment is available

Modified equipment is available to ensure participants can enjoy the sport of bowls for a lifetime:

- A bowlers-arm can be used to alleviate hip/knee difficulties.
- Wheelchairs with the correct specifications can be used on many greens.
- Walking frames/sticks with enlarged rubber touch points can also assist with balance when delivering a bowl.

### Wear the right protective equipment

- Seek professional advice when selecting bowls, as the correct size bowl will help to improve player technique and prevent injury.
- Seek professional advice on footwear.
- Change footwear to shoes with grip soles when stepping off the green.