

Preventing Australian Football Injuries



Facts and Safety Tips for Australian Football

For further information contact

Smartplay – Sports Medicine Australia

To contact Smartplay in your state visit www.smartplay.com.au or www.sma.org.au

Australian Football League

Phone: 03 9643 1999

Website: www.afl.com.au

References

For a full list of references, contact Smartplay.

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Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing



Victoria
The Place To Be

Game safety

- Wear a mouthguard, preferably custom-fitted, at all times.
- Protective headgear, ankle braces and thigh protectors can protect players with a history of head, ankle or thigh injuries.
- Drink water during and after a game or training session.
- Umpires should enforce game rules at all levels.
- Avoid drinking alcohol after a game.

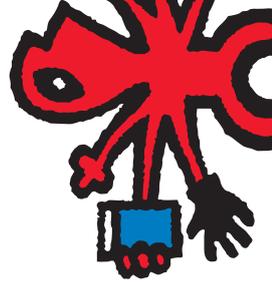
Modify rules and equipment for children

- Games for children and teenagers should be played in accordance with the Australian Football Match Policy for the conduct of the game for players aged 5-18 years.

If an injury occurs

- Players should seek prompt attention from qualified first aid personnel.
- A health professional should make the decision whether an injured player returns to the field.
- Ensure players are fully rehabilitated before returning to play after injury.

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Facts on Australian football injuries

Australian football is one of the most popular sports in Australia, with thousands playing and watching the sport each year.

Statistics show there were 638,000 registered participants in Australian football across the country in 2007.

Australian football is a contact sport that often results in injuries from tackling, kicking, running, handballing, marking and constant physical competition for the ball.

How many injuries?

- From 2002-2003, 3,944 people were admitted to hospitals across Australia for Australian football-related injuries.
- In Victoria, from 2002-2004, 9,562 people visited Victorian emergency departments for Australian football-related injuries.
- 48% of hospital treated injuries occur to players aged 15-24 years.
- 96% of all injury cases are male.
- Recent studies have indicated that the rates of injury in junior Australian football, particularly AFL Auskick, are very low.



The causes and types of injuries

- Common causes of injuries are being tackled, hit/struck by another player, hit by the ball and falls.
- Injuries are more likely to occur in the first four weeks of the playing season.
- Injuries to the thigh, knee, lower leg and ankle are most common in non-hospital-treated injuries.
- Overuse injuries occur frequently among higher level and older players.
- Sports medicine clinics most commonly treat knee and ankle sprains.

Factors increasing your injury risk

- Having had a sports injury in the previous 12 months.
- Being aged 25 years or older.
- Playing in midfield positions.
- Persistent back problems diagnosed by a health professional.
- Increasing age and decreasing quadriceps flexibility, for sustaining hamstring injury.
- A history of two or more injuries to the lower body, in the previous Australian football season.

Factors decreasing your injury risk

- Playing Australian football in the last 12 months.
- Excellent stamina.
- Cooling down after training sessions.
- Playing a modified rules version at junior level.
- Participating in one or more hours per week of weight training during the season, to decrease the risk of lower body injury.

Safety tips for Australian football

Good preparation is important

- Undertake training sessions prior to competition to ensure readiness to play.
- Undertake pre-season training to improve strength, flexibility, stamina, agility and balance. A trained coach or fitness advisor can guide you in the right direction.
- Before playing competitively learn, practise and use correct skills and techniques.

Providing a safe environment

- Check the ground to remove or cover hazardous objects e.g. broken glass or sprinkler heads.
- Cricket pitches should be covered with a soft surface.
- Fences should be a minimum of three metres from the boundary line.
- Goal posts must be padded with high-density foam, at least two metres high and with 35 millimetres thickness. Padding should be in good condition and replaced when worn or damaged.
- Qualified first aid personnel, first aids kits, ice packs and a stretcher should be available at all times.
- Telephone access, to contact emergency services, is essential.

Pre-game safety

- Complete a warm up including stretching, slow jogging and running activities, with and without a football.
- Eat a balanced, nutritional diet.
- Drink water before a game or training session.
- Avoid drinking alcohol 48 hours before a game.
- Seek professional advice about the most appropriate boots to wear for playing conditions.
- Wear sunscreen and re-apply during breaks on sunny days.
- Be aware of game rules, play fairly and respect opponents and umpiring decisions.