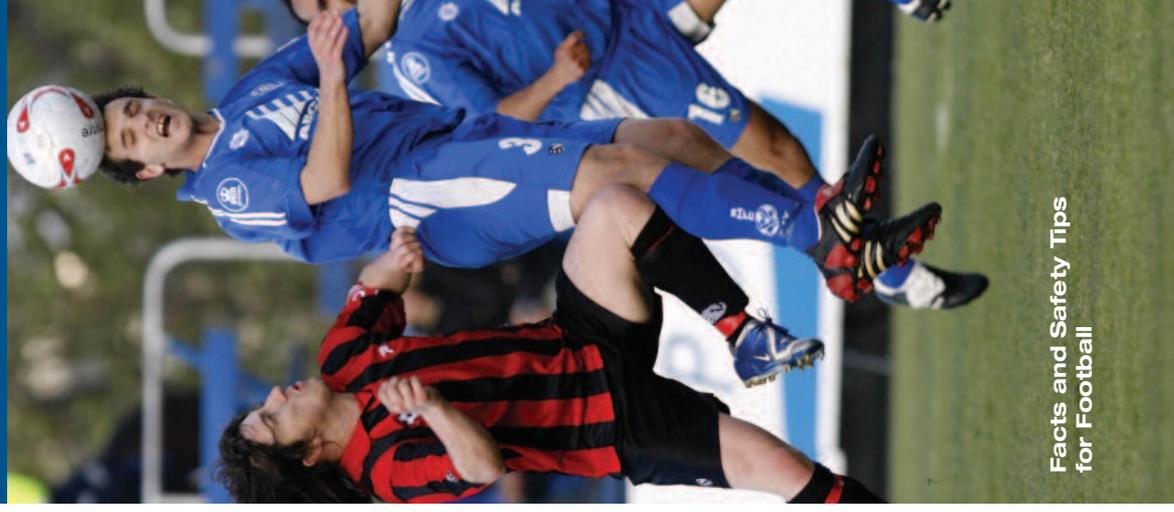


Preventing Football Injuries



Facts and Safety Tips
for 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

References

For a full list of references, contact Smartplay.

Acknowledgments

Smartplay is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. This fact sheet has been reprinted with the permission of the Department of Planning and Community Development and VicHealth. Prepared by Monash University Accident Research Centre 1997. Updated and reprinted 2008. Photos courtesy of Football Federation Victoria.

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 pitch 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.



This information contained in this fact sheet is general in nature and does not constitute medical advice from your doctor or health professional. While all reasonable attempts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this fact sheet, Smartplay and associated parties, cannot accept responsibility for loss, injury, claim or damage resulting from the use or application of information within this fact sheet.



Facts on football injuries

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

Statistics from the Australian Sports Commission's 2006 survey showed an estimated 697,400 Australians aged 15 years and older played outdoor football in the 12-month period prior to being surveyed. A further 310,100 people played indoor football.

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

How many injuries?

- From 2002-2003, 3,270 people were admitted to hospitals across Australia for football-related injuries.
- In Victoria, from 2002-2004, 3,376 people visited Victorian emergency departments for football-related injuries.
- The rate of injury for football 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, to the upper body and head are most common.
- Common causes of injuries are player contact, falls and tackles.
- The quality of playing areas due to drought conditions may contribute to injury.

Factors increasing your injury risk

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

Safety tips for football

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 reaccreditation 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 football 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 football 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 Small-Sided Games at their local club 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.