

LAWN BOWLS - HEALTH AND SAFETY

Lawn bowls is a very popular sport in the UK, and is accessible to almost everyone. As well as being a great form of physical activity, lawn bowls is also a wonderful social activity. You can meet more people in your local area and make new friends.

However many players are over 55 years of age, and falls are the most frequent cause of injury. Other injuries that may occur include fractures, strains and sprains.

People who take part in lawn bowls develop skills and coordination, which not only improves their fitness, but also helps their confidence and self-esteem.

However, as with all sports, it is important to know how to prevent injury.

Risk factors for lawn bowls injuries

Some of the factors that can increase your risk of injury include:

- Incorrect technique – using the correct swinging action when bowling is an important factor in preventing injury. Poor delivery or balance, or incorrect grip of the bowl can lead to injury.
- Ensure that when stepping on and off the green you step over the ditch sideways to avoid the risk of tripping. If you are unable to step over the ditch then use the entry points.
- Failure to warm up and cool down – warming up and cooling down is extremely important to reduce the risk of muscle and joint injuries.
- Time spent playing – the repetitive movements associated with bowling can be associated with injury.
- Previous injury – lawn bowls can aggravate existing injury, so make sure any injuries are fully rehabilitated before you play.

Health and safety advice for lawn bowls

Some suggestions and tips include:

- If you have a medical condition, are overweight, are over 55 years old or haven't exercised regularly, it may be worth getting a check-up.
- Take lessons from a qualified coach to develop adequate skills and technique.
- Good preparation is important. Warm up by stretching before play to improve joint range of movement and prevent muscular strain also use gentle stretching exercises to cool down after play to prevent stiffness and cardiovascular complications.
- Be SunSmart – use SPF30+ sunscreen/lip balm, wear an appropriate hat and seek shade where possible.
- Avoid playing lawn bowls in extreme weather conditions.
- Drink water before, during and after activity to keep hydrated.

Good lawn bowl technique and practices

- Use correct techniques – poor delivery or balance, or incorrect grip of the bowl can lead to injury.
- Try balance training and exercises to strengthen your legs, back and neck to help prevent falls.
- Use bowls trolleys to avoid lifting the bowls bag.
- Take adequate rest between games.
- Have a mobile phone handy, whenever possible, in case of an emergency.

Correct equipment for lawn bowls

Use appropriate equipment for lawn bowls, including:

- Seek advice from an experienced bowler when you choose bowls to make sure they are the correct size. This will help to improve your technique and prevent injury.
- Wear proper bowls shoes, you will not be allowed on the green without them.
- The club will provide non-slip bowling mats with a significant grip on the top surface to allow traction between your shoes and the mat.

If a bowling injury occurs

- If an injury occurs, stop immediately to help prevent any further damage.
- Seek first aid or prompt medical treatment of an injury. This is important for all injured players, no matter how severe (or seemingly minor) the injury is.
- The Club will ensure it has a well-stocked first aid kit, a telephone and emergency contact numbers on display.
- Don't resume playing until you are completely recovered from any injury.