



SMARTPLAY

GEAR UP

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Don't put your body on the line for sport when protective equipment can save you from injury.

The facts

- ▶ Protective equipment should be worn at all times (training and games).
- ▶ It should fit correctly.
- ▶ It is important to regularly check and maintain protective equipment.
- ▶ Use new equipment prior to competition.
- ▶ Equipment should be specific and appropriate for the sport, size, and age of the athlete.
- ▶ Equipment should always be used according to the manufacturer's guidelines and the recommendations of the sporting body concerned.
- ▶ Remember injuries usually mean time on the sideline – *prevention is the key.*

Wrist, elbow and knee guards

- ▶ Protective wrist guards are useful to protect from impact when falling onto an outstretched hand.
- ▶ Padded knee protectors absorb impact forces from falls onto concrete and skating surfaces, and collisions with racing poles.
- ▶ Elbows are at risk when falling and padding will reduce grazing and protect the joint from impact.
- ▶ In sports such as rollerskating, rollerblading, ski racing, snow boarding and skateboarding there is a chance of falling onto hard surfaces or striking racing poles.
- ▶ Injuries from these falls can range from minor to severe abrasions, sprains and fractures; protective equipment will help to absorb much of the shock and lessen the chance of injury.

Shin pads

- ▶ Shin injuries are common in sports where there is a fast moving object e.g. hockey, softball, cricket, lacrosse.
- ▶ Properly fitting shin pads will prevent a large number of these injuries.
- ▶ You should ensure that the shin pads are appropriate for the sport i.e. different shin pads for hockey and soccer.

Shoulder padding and body protectors

- ▶ In tackling sports such as rugby league and union, shoulder protectors are recommended to protect the top of the shoulder joint from impact injury
- ▶ Padded body protectors help to protect the trunk, particularly the chest area, from impact injury in sports such as fencing or softball and baseball (catcher and referee).
- ▶ "Boxes" for boys in sports such as cricket and hockey are essential to protect the genitals.

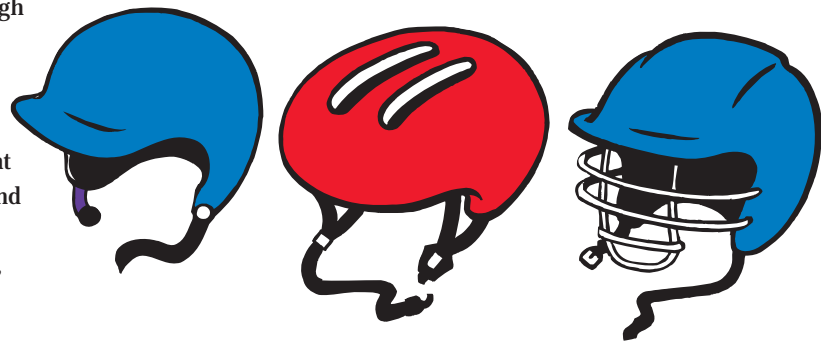


Eye protection

- ▶ Sports can be classified on the basis of low risk, high risk and extremely high risk of eye injuries.
- ▶ Sports with a high risk of eye injury (when protective devices are not being worn) are those involving a high-speed ball or puck, the use of a bat or stick, close aggressive play with body contact and collision, or a combination of these. Examples include racquet sports (racquetball, squash, tennis, badminton) and lacrosse.
- ▶ There is an increased risk of serious eye injury if an athlete already has an eye problem.
- ▶ Any athlete with permanently reduced vision in one eye should always use protective eyewear for any sports.
- ▶ Normal streetwear eyeglass frames with 2mm polycarbonate lenses give adequate and cosmetically acceptable protection for routine use by active people. Such protective glasses are satisfactory for athletes in competition who wear eyeglasses and participate in low-risk sport
- ▶ Moulded polycarbonate frames and lenses are suggested for contact lens wearers and athletes who ordinarily do not wear glasses but participate in moderate-to-high-risk, non-contact sports (e.g. racquet sports, baseball, basketball). They can be used in combination with a face mask or helmet with face protection for additional protection in high-risk contact or collision sports.
- ▶ Eye protection glasses are available from your local squash courts and selected sports stores.
- ▶ Consult your optometrist for advice on vision requirements and protective equipment specific for your sport.



Helmets



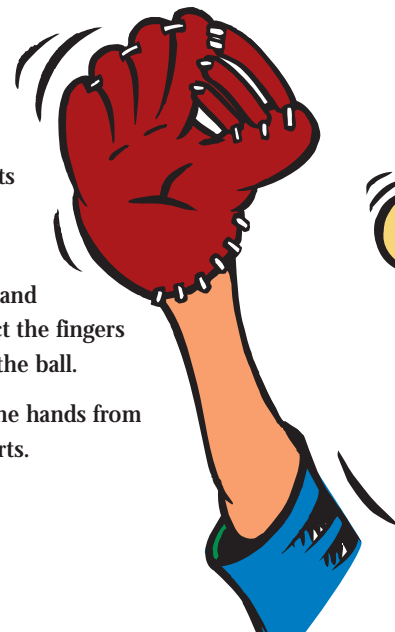
- ▶ In sports where high-speed collisions are likely (e.g. motorcycling, cycling) hard-shell helmets are of proven value.
- ▶ In sports that have the potential for missile injuries (e.g. baseball, lacrosse) or for falls onto hard surfaces (e.g. gridiron, ice-hockey) specific helmets can reduce head injuries.
- ▶ For sports such as soccer, Australian rules football and rugby no sport-specific helmets have been shown to be of benefit in reducing rates of head injury.
- ▶ Helmets should be approved by the sporting association concerned.

Ankle taping and braces

- ▶ Ankle taping and braces can protect the ankle from injury when an athlete lands awkwardly.
- ▶ They can be used to protect an injured ankle when a player returns to sport.
- ▶ Effective ankle bracing is also useful. Frequent ankle taping can be expensive; an ankle brace is just as effective and less expensive overall.
- ▶ Ankle braces and tape can be purchased from your local pharmacy or sports store.
- ▶ For advice about what type of braces to buy and how to tape effectively, contact your local sports physiotherapist, sports doctor or sports trainer.

Gloves

- ▶ Protective gloves help to prevent bruising and fractures of the fingers, thumbs and hand in sports such as cricket, baseball and softball.
- ▶ In sports such as hockey and cricket, gloves can protect the fingers from impact injury from the ball.
- ▶ Gloves can also protect the hands from blisters in equestrian sports.



Mouthguards



The National Health and Medical Research Council officially recommends custom-made mouthguards for contact sports because of their superior fit, comfort and level of protection.

- ▶ Mouthguards act as a shock absorber for the teeth and jaw.
- ▶ Dental injuries are the most common type of mouth and facial injury in sport.
- ▶ Treatment of dental injuries can take many months and can be costly.
- ▶ If participants are involved in sports where they are at risk of a blow to the head or face from either opponents or equipment, they should wear a properly fitted mouthguard.
- ▶ A mouthguard correctly fitted by a dentist will protect teeth, stop biting into the lips and act as a cushioned layer between teeth to reduce the risk of concussion and jaw fracture.

Mouthguards should ...

- ▶ fit the mouth accurately
- ▶ allow normal breathing and speech
- ▶ be custom designed and fitted by a qualified professional.

Three types of mouthguard

Stock mouthguards

These are a bulky gutter of rigid plastic available from pharmacies and sports stores. They are very uncomfortable, interfere with speech and breathing and, because they are not firmly secured, offer a false sense of protection.

Boil and bite mouthguards

Pharmacies and sports stores also sell “boil and bite” mouthguards. They are made from a thermoplastic material which is softened in hot water and then placed in the mouth to mould to the teeth as the guard is bitten. Like stock guards, they are cheap but never fit well and their shape easily deforms. They can be uncomfortable, impair breathing and speech, offer limited protection and can be an airway hazard.

Custom-fitted mouthguards

These are made by a dental professional using an impression of the teeth from special shock-absorbing plastic. A custom-fitted mouthguard fits a person's mouth perfectly. The accurate fit and control of the thickness maximises the shock absorbing effect. They fit comfortably and won't interfere with breathing or speech.

How much is your smile worth?

A top quality custom-made mouthguard costs between \$45 and \$120. The price of not using the best protective mouthguard can be enormous. The cost of replacing a single tooth can be up to \$4,000 and this can reach \$20,000 over a lifetime of replacement and maintenance.

Shoes

- ▶ Shoes should be considered an important part of protective equipment.
- ▶ Athletes should be aware that appropriate shoes for sport can help prevent injuries.
- ▶ Shoes should be properly fitted for the individual and be appropriate for the sport or activity and playing surface.

Tips for buying athletic shoes

There are four features you can test when in the store.

Torsion

The greater the twist of the shoe, the more the foot will roll. You want a shoe with minimal movement.

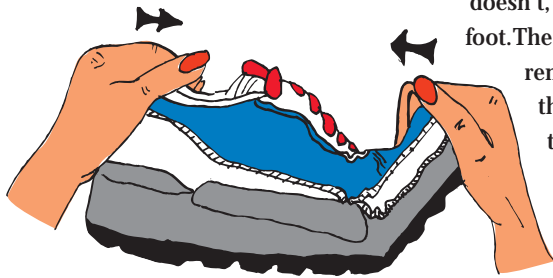
To test, grasp the sole and the front of the shoe near the ball of the foot and twist lengthways.



Flexion

The shoe should bend right at the ball of the foot. If it doesn't, neither will your foot. The shoe should remain stiff from the back of heel to the ball of the foot.

Grasp the heel and toe of the shoe and push together.



Midsole density

With your two thumbs, compress the rubber of the midsole. If it compresses by more than a third it may be too soft. Soft shoes with lots of cushioning are only good for walking. Your shop assistant might talk about dual-density midsoles. This is where the sole on the inside of the heel is soft and

the sole on the out side of the heel is hard. This is good if you are a pronator (foot rolls outwards). Neutral midsoles are ideal for supinators (foot rolls inwards).

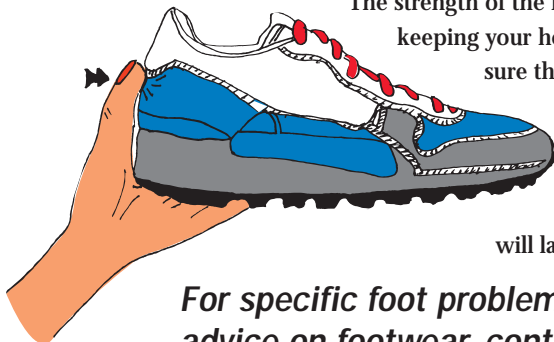


Heel counter

With your thumb, squash down on the heel counter.

The strength of the heel is important to keeping your heel upright. Make sure the heel counter is made of plastic, not cardboard.

Plastic provides more support and will last longer



For specific foot problems and further advice on footwear, contact your local sports podiatrist.

For further information

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