

# SHIN PADS: WHY BOTHER?



Blows to the shin are common in football but shin pads can significantly reduce the force delivered by a kick to the leg by 44-77%. That could be the difference between a bruise and a fracture. They also reduce the damage caused to the other player so it's unwise **and** selfish not to wear shin pads.

You have to wear them in games so get used to them in training – injuries occur then as well. Whether it's indoor or outdoor football, winter or summer league, 5, 7 or 11-a-side, training or a game, protect yourself at ALL times to minimise the risk of injury.

Protection doesn't have to be expensive to be effective. Some of the lighter, plastic shin pads, which are often the cheapest, provide a high degree of protection.



1. Try on lots of pairs (with your usual boots and socks) and pick the ones which feel most comfortable.
2. Go for something that protects as much of the shin area as possible and sits no more than 8cm (about 4 finger widths) below your knee cap.
3. Extra padding around the ankle and achilles area is worth the extra bulkiness.
4. Strikers in particular should definitely consider ankle protection.

## Ankle support

If you've had an ankle injury in the past you're at increased risk of another one, but you can reduce that risk by strapping your ankle(s) before training/playing or by wearing a brace.

<i>Strapping</i>	<i>Brace</i>
<i>Cheap as a one-off</i>	<i>More expensive at the outset but more cost effective over time – can be used over again</i>
<i>Effective support is generally reduced after 20 minutes</i>	<i>Maintains support for longer</i>
<i>Takes time and practice to apply</i>	<i>Many are simple and quick to fit</i>

All players, whether previously injured or not, should consider ankle protection, even if it's just as part of their shin pad. Exercises to strengthen the ankles are also recommended.

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# GETTING PROTECTED



## Mouth guards

Mouth guards aren't common in soccer but blows to the face and mouth are (mainly to goal keepers). Wearing a mouth guard will reduce the pain and damage caused. They're quick to put in and take out and you needn't worry about not being able to communicate – modern designs are comfortable and allow you to talk normally.



## Chest guards

A blow to the chest area can be painful, particularly for female players, and the long-term effects are unclear. The Cool Guard chest protector bra is ideal for soccer. As well as protecting the chest area from impacts, the bra also provides the support found with any good sports bra. Contact New Zealand Soccer for more information (see below).



## Footwear

It's not just what you wear **on** the field that can reduce your risk of injury, what you wear **off** the field is also important. See 'The Gear' section for lots of useful advice.



## Clothing

The hands of goal keepers are at high risk of injury but the risk can be reduced by wearing good quality gloves that fit well, are non-restrictive and have hard wrist protectors to avoid hyper-extension of the wrist.

Keepers should also wear shorts and a shirt with adequate padding on the hips, thighs, elbows and chest.

All players should have plenty of layers and waterproof outer wear with them at all times.

For more advice on clothing and equipment for football, contact Helen Tunstall at New Zealand Soccer on (09) 414 0174 or email [helent@soccernz.co.nz](mailto:helent@soccernz.co.nz)