

## Crown Green/Lawn Bowls

If you have been lucky enough to visit a beach it is more than likely that you have played *boule* of some description! Where you may have used the contours of the beach, there has always been an attraction for me of playing a similar sport on a flat surface, using the weighting of the bowls to get close to the jack. As well as the tactical and cognitive element there are also a lot of positive health benefits, irrespective of age!

A study carried out by Daly et al in 2013 identified that as many as 92% of bowls players are over the age of 45 and around 2/3 are males. With improved nutrition and healthcare we have an aging demographic, so it likely that this percentage is even larger today.

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### *THE ART OF BOWLS*

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Just by watching players there are key aspects of the game that will need to be reflected in the fitness and preparation...flexibility, slow and controlled movements that demonstrate smooth mobility, a good range of motion (especially shoulders, hips and knees) and finger strength to present, hold and dexterously release the bowl at the right angle with the right force in an attempt to attain their tactical goal.

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### *FOCUS ON FITNESS*

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The main obstacle to avoiding injury in an older population is related to strength training. Many older people trip, stumble, slip or fall leading to bruising at best or broken bones requiring surgery at worst, as they do not have the ability to counteract gravity to the extent needed to lift and control particularly the lower limbs. Muscle mass loss (sarcopenia) in older people is commonly associated with a sedentary lifestyle. Bones and muscles adapt to a greater load being put through them, and due to the efficiency of the body, the opposite is also true. After all, why waste energy and thickening bone or increasing muscle density if it is not going to be used? Without activity up to 50% of skeletal muscle mass can disappear by the age of 80.

It is important to note that lawn bowls has an intensity equivalent to that of horse riding, walking, golf and laundry work (Ainsworth, BE et al 2011 Compendium of Physical Activity: a second update of codes and MET values ) and therefore is not to be underestimated!

Bowls, although not a high intensity activity does require the players to remain on their feet for a considerable amount of time and limbs, especially the legs are loaded through partial squats and lunges. Perhaps this strength element should be seen as minimising muscles loss rather than gaining additional muscle mass; which is still highly valuable when seeking a full active, healthy lifestyle, irrespective of age. [Find out more here.](#)

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For those keen to take up the sport for the first time or who just want to find out may find this [beginner's guide](#) useful.

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### EXERCISE OVERVIEW

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#### LOWER BODY

Lower impact exercise	Equivalent more challenging exercise
Walking	Jogging
Stair climb	Stair climb with weighted back pack/ leg press
'Sit-to-stand'	Squats
Static Lunges (with support if necessary)	Weighted lunges/ weighted split squats

**NB:** Bowls is not a high intensity/short duration activity therefore any addition of weight should be light. We are looking to develop muscular endurance, so the muscles can carry out a repeated action without getting tired. We are not trying to build muscle bulk!

#### UPPER BODY

Lower impact exercise	Equivalent more challenging exercise
Back extensions- drawing tall through the spine	Back hyper-extensions
Squeeze shoulder blades together	Dumb bell upward rows
Smooth arm swings	Front & lateral raises, cable machine (high pull)
Plank	Plank held for longer duration/sit-ups

**NB:** Don't neglect your wrist and finger strength. Hold a can of beans as if you were holding a bowl and slowly rock your palm towards your forearm. When you have reached full range of motion, rock back to the ground as far as you can. When you can't go any further, allow the can to roll to the ends of your fingers (by opening them slightly), then curl them back to roll the tin back into your palm.



The key is to do these slowly and under control (it's harder!) and requires greater activation of the muscles you are training.



As with the upper body, only light resistance (use of gravity, a tin or light weights in the gym) is needed as the aim is to improve muscular endurance- being able to repeat an action without the muscles getting tired. If muscles do get tired/we lose mobility around a joint our game will become less consistent and less accurate.

If you are mature of age and would like to [condition full body strength](#), rather than just focusing on the elements required for lawn bowls then this article may be of interest.

Whatever your preference, if you maintain your fitness and you will have many happy bowling seasons ahead!



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