A retrospective study was undertaken in 2003 with surfers from 22 nations who were questioned as to injuries suffered. A trilingual paper and online questionnaire was used. The 471 surfers included in the analysis reported a total of 466 acute injuries. The computation of the injury incidence (number of injuries per 1000 surfing hours) was 0.41. The majority of acute injuries was in the lower extremities (44.6 %) and the head (27.8 %), followed by injuries to the trunk (14.8 %) and the upper extremities (12.2 %). The foot outnumbered by far every other single injury location (19.6 %). With regard to types of injuries suffered, cuts dominated significantly (37.4%). Contusions (11.7%) held second place. Strains (9.5%) and fractures (7.6 %) were next in rank. The majority of the injuries was due either to collision with the own surfboard (52.4 %) or with the seafloor (15.5%). The fin caused a total of 51.1 % of all surfboard-related injuries and was thus the number one source of injuries. A large part of the acute injuries could be prevented by always using safety fins and noseguards, as well as wearing neoprene shoes and helmets. Strategic marketing by industry and professional sports is necessary to improve the image of such safety equipment. It would also contribute to a broader use of such equipment among surfers.