

SOCCER WARM UP

The soccer warm-up before the start of a football match or training session only takes a few minutes. The warm-up can avoid serious injury, and the stretching exercises promote agility. If you pull a hamstring or get a back injury, you can be out of soccer for months, and often such injuries are avoidable. The reasons for the warm-up are to avoid injury, and to be able to play at your peak right from the starting whistle. At the same time, the stretching exercises promote agility. Any warm-up program should gradually raise the heart rate, and stretch and warm the muscles.

Muscle Strain : Causes

Muscle strains may be caused by one or a number of factors including:

- inadequate warm-up programme,
- insufficient flexibility,
- insufficient muscular strength, poor coordination,
- fatigue, or
- a premature return to play after rehabilitation of a prior injury.

Ideally, you should warm-up for 10 to 15 minutes prior to initiation of play. It should be followed by a thorough stretching session that allows a 30 to 60 second stretch of all major muscle groups. These stretches should be static in nature – do not bounce during a stretch.

Treatment of muscle injuries

Acute muscle injuries should be initially treated using the RICE mnemonic:

- rest,
- ice
- compression of the injured muscle and • elevation of the injured area above the level of the heart.

Prevention

In general, prevention of muscle injury is always the goal and can be achieved through:

- a comprehensive pre-season conditioning programme
- thorough warm-up
- attention to stretching to enhance muscular flexibility
- progressive strengthening exercises, and
- proper nutrition and hydration.

GROWTH SPURT

During a growth spurt, bones grow very quickly. Muscles cannot keep up with this growth they become tighter and exert increased tension on their bony insertions. As well as getting painful regions, young players may lose co-ordination and skill as they struggle to control their quickly growing bones. Take this into consideration, children grow at different rates and at different times.

Soccer Warm-up For Ages 13+

Start your soccer warm-up with some gentle exercise, such as jogging. The aim is to raise the heart rate to around 120 beats per minute. Then perform some *gentle* stretches, holding for about 5s. The following is a sample stretching program, which illustrates the idea of working each of the major muscle groups. There are many alternative stretching programs that you could use instead of this one. The important point is to check that each of the muscle groups is being exercised.

Loosen your ankles by lifting the right leg and rotating your foot clockwise, and then anticlockwise for several seconds. Repeat with the left leg. Here are two exercises for stretching your calves. Keeping your right foot firmly on the ground, and your right leg straight, take a stride forward with your left leg and bend your left knee. You should feel your right calf stretch. Repeat for the left calf. Alternatively, cross your legs, and keeping your legs together, bend over at the hips, and put your arms behind your back calf. Try to touch the ground. Repeat for the other calf. Now stretch the hamstrings. Sit down on the ground with both legs stretched out together in front of you. Bend over and try to touch your toes. Then with your legs apart, touch the toes of each leg in turn. Alternatively, you can try this exercise standing up. The groin stretch is to stand with your feet apart, and bend one knee whilst facing forwards to stretch the opposite groin. Keep your back straight, and adjust your weight until you feel your groin stretch. A simple quadriceps stretch is to stand on one foot, grab the other foot with your hand, and bend your leg back until your foot touches your bottom. It's important with this exercise to keep your back straight as you stretch. This completes the lower body warm up.

The stomach can be stretched as follows. Lie down with your hands by your shoulders in the press-up position. Instead of doing a press-up, lift your waist off the ground using your stomach muscles, and repeat several times. Note that this is just a warm-up for the stomach. Use sit-ups or weights to develop the stomach muscles. Stand up straight with your legs apart and muscles relaxed. Put your hands on your hips, and swing clockwise with your hips in a circular motion. Repeat going anticlockwise. Try to achieve a smooth rolling motion. Now the sides: Put your arms straight above your head, and bring your hands together. In a large arc, move your hands down to your left foot, and then over your head to your right foot. Bend your right arm behind your back, over the right shoulder. Bring your left hand to your right shoulder. You should feel your right arm stretch. Repeat for the left arm. To stretch your back, put your hands together, keep your legs apart, bend at your waist and stretch your hands out in front of you. Don't attempt to touch the ground. Next bring your arms behind your back, keeping them together, and stretch backwards. Finally, you can loosen your neck by bringing your chin to your left shoulder, rotating your head to look up to the

sky, then bring your chin to your right shoulder, and then look down to the floor. The aim is to rotate the head in a gentle, circular motion.

Continue the warm-up with more vigorous activity, and complete a second round of the stretching program. This time stretch a little more and hold for about 10s. Each player has his own preference how to warm-up for the game, but the basic idea of the activity is to get the circulation going so that you are not starting the game cold. Examples include jogging around the pitch, jogging on the spot, bicycle kicks, and running with high knees. It's a good idea to pass the ball around between teammates to get a few touches of the ball before the match starts. Some players like to juggle the ball on their own before the game.

The recommended Football Association warm-up and most professional team warm-ups include a third stage of more vigorous activity and longer hold stretches. The objectives are to raise the heart rate to 160 - 200 bpm (beats per minute), and to make sure that the muscles are ready for the game. If you have the time and commitment, this is a good idea. However, if you are new to a stretching program, be careful not to overdo the warm-up. This phase consists of stretches with holds of about 15s duration, and some short sprints or similar exercise to raise the heart rate.

Gentle stretches *after* a match or strenuous practise helps to reduce stiffness and aids recovery.

Warm-up for Ages 10-12

A short 10 minute warm-up is all that is necessary, and over-stretching at this age can even be harmful. Perform the first phase of the adult warm-up consisting of jogging followed by one round of *gentle* stretching with 5s holds. Follow this with a few minutes practising ball control skills.

Warm-up for Ages Under 10

Stretching exercises are not necessary, and the warm-up need only be very brief. Some jogging, swinging of the arms, twists of the hips or other movements to loosen up will suffice.

This page is taken from [Soccer Academy](#), the interactive football coaching software from Mastersport Multimedia for children, parents and coaches.

<http://www.mastersport.co.uk/soccerwarmup.htm>



Fun Dribbling Games

Bees

One they really seem to like is to dribble in an area (tell them they are bees and to buzz), then after awhile, have the coaches (or a few parents) walk around inside the area. It is the job of the "bees" to "sting" the big people with the ball (a pass or kick). The need to keep looking for a target and hitting it. They really seem to enjoy this one.

"Sharks & Minnows" or "Freeze Tag"

Again, mark of an area (20x20, or whatever makes sense for the number of kids) and have each kid with a ball (minnows). Then release a shark into the area (one of the kids without a ball). The sharks job is to get the other kids balls. I play for just a touch, can also have kick out of the area. Once a ball has been played, the dribbler (minnow) is frozen, have them take the ball over their head and put their legs apart. To be unfrozen (released), another player (minnow) needs to put a ball between their legs (usually dribbled). Switch the sharks every 30 seconds to a minute.

"Wave Game"

Another game is with a 20x20 area (easily could be bigger). Have all the kids with a ball at one end. Their job is to dribble inside the square to the other end. Start with the coach or other person in the middle. They are to try and kick the ball out of the area. If a person loses their ball, they help in the middle. Play starts on a go command, so there is a big wave of people trying to get across.

"Rapid Fire"

Can also play this where the person in the middle has all of the balls and they try to hit the runners (below the waist) with a good pass/kick. For U7s, this can be a bit hard...

http://www.decatursports.com/drills/fun_dribbling.htm

Other good links to great information :

<http://www.decatursports.com/drills/MattsPlans.htm>

<http://www.decatursports.com/exercises.htm>

Some more ideas :



Soccer

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop ability to dribble a soccer ball with each foot, and keep the ball under control. • Develop awareness of other people whilst dribbling.
Equipment	One soccer ball per person, several witches hats
Warm up	Jog around oval, followed by stretches, concentrating on legs.
Body	<p>The ball can be dribbled with the inside or the outside of the foot. Set up witches hats randomly in a confined space. Have the students dribble throughout the space without touching any of the cones or other people or other soccer balls.</p> <p>Students practice dribbling with different parts of the foot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inside of the foot Outside of the foot Left foot only Right foot only Both feet - inside only Both feet - outside only Both feet - inside and outside of feet <p>Poison trees: All players have a soccer ball. Half the class are trees. They stand still, holding their ball. The other players dribble around the trees. If their ball touches a tree they become a tree and the tree becomes a dribbler.</p> <p>Pirates: One third of the class returns their soccer balls, these students are pirates. The rest of the class continues to dribble in a confined space. The pirates try to steal the balls off the other players (using their feet). Players who lose their ball become new pirates.</p>
Warm down	Leg stretches.

Dribble, Shoot and Score

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop ability to dribble a soccer ball with each foot, and keep the ball under control.• Kick with power and accuracy
Equipment	One soccer ball per person, several witches hats, soccer goals, large stuffed animal or similar.
Warm up	In pairs, kick a ball to each other
Body	<p>Set up lines of witches hats for students to zig zag through. Tape the stuffed animal to the crossbar of the goal.</p> <p>Students dribble through the witches hats then shoot at the stuffed animal, getting points for hitting. Or for missing if you pretend the toy is the goal keeper.</p> <p>Can set up more than one line of hats to dribble through, and more than one goal to keep more students active. Or use as part of a circuit.</p>
Variations	Instead of a toy, simply have two strips of tape or rope hanging from the crossbar a small way inside the posts. Players get two points for scoring outside the ropes but inside the goal, and one point for inside the ropes. None for missing the goal completely. (It's not Aussie rules)
Teaching Points	Correct kicking technique, ball close to feet whilst dribbling, use of both feet whilst dribbling. Encourage use of either foot for shooting.

<http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/edu/projects/migi/secure/teacher2/LESSON/LSPRT.HTM>