



A proper warmup is an important first step to preventing injury in soccer. U.S. Soccer's Recognize to Recover program highlights the elements of an appropriate warmup to maximize the injury prevention benefits before any game or practice.

A good warmup creates a foundation for good performance. In youth soccer, an appropriate warmup should last at least 20 minutes. Numerous studies show the dramatic effect a proper warmup has in reducing injuries on the field. During the warmup, players prepare mentally as well as physically. A good warmup helps players focus their attention on the game or practice that follows, increasing the level of performance.

Warmup exercises typically concentrate on preparing the body for play. These physical activities target different muscles which are important for maximizing soccer performance. In doing so, the warmup also helps protect the player from injuring these different muscles.

JOG BEFORE YOU RUN

Warmup activities should build in intensity and lead into the activity which follows, whether a game or practice.

Start slow

Begin the warmup with low intensity movements like jogging, skipping and shuffling side-to-side. Increase the heart rate gradually to be ready for the practice or game to start.

Stretch

Stretching is extremely important. Stretching should be dynamic, not done standing still. Incorporate full range of motion stretches into low-intensity movements, like walking or jogging.

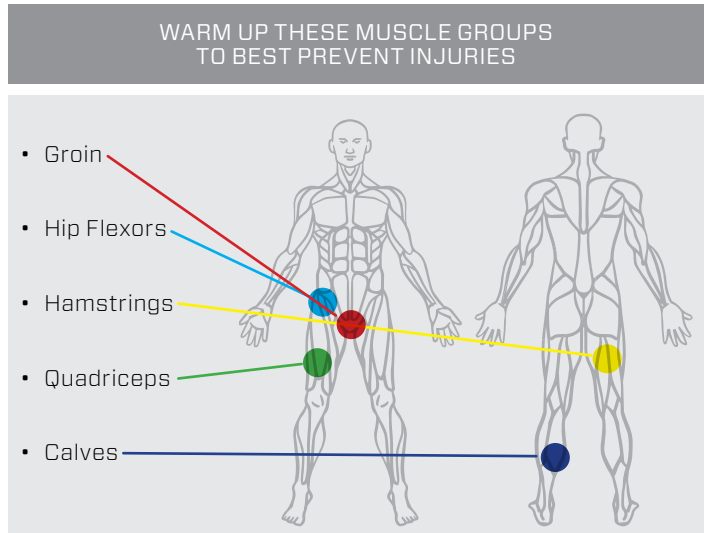
Include a ball

Integrate ball skills into the warmup, such as dribbling at slower speeds. This is an opportunity to work on technical skills and become more acquainted with the ball.

PROGRESSION OF ACTIVITIES

A typical warmup progresses from linear to multi-directional activities. Initial warmup exercises should have players moving along a straight line. Once muscles have begun to warm, exercises can incorporate changes of direction to increase the intensity and effectiveness of the warmup.

The warmup should finish with accelerations, sprints or high-intensity changes of direction to simulate actual game-play situations to make sure the player is prepared for the game or practice session.



DEVELOPING A WARMUP PROGRAM

Incorporating a variety of exercises into a warmup program may allow players and coaches to create a program tailored to their interests and needs. Some exercises or activities may not be appropriate for certain age groups or skill levels.

One warm-up program that has shown to reduce injuries by as much as 50 percent is FIFA 11+. Find out more about the program on the FIFA website.