

Injury Prevention for the Un-Injured Soccer Player

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Injuries in soccer are common, but many can be prevented. The most prevalent injury types in soccer are ankle and knee sprains and hamstring and groin strains. These account for more than 50% of all injuries. In the female soccer player, there is an increasing prevalence of ACL injuries.

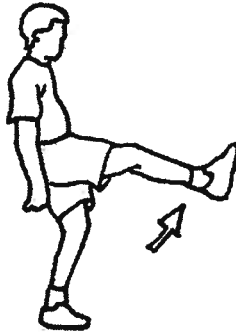
The following is a group of exercises designed to help the un-injured soccer player prevent these common injuries. Included is a dynamic warm-up and key stretching and strengthening exercises that address the needs of a soccer player. It is important that these exercises are done consistently and with proper form. Stop each exercise if you cannot maintain proper form. Try to begin each practice with a dynamic warm-up and end with stretches. Incorporating these into your soccer routine may help prevent the common injuries that can keep you from participating at your best.

Dynamic Warm-up: The purpose of a dynamic warm-up is to increase muscle temperature in order to enhance the effectiveness of muscle contraction, increase oxygen to the muscles, increase tissue elasticity, and create movement patterns for game situations. These should be done as a warm-up in addition jogging (forward, backward, shuffling) and light stretching.

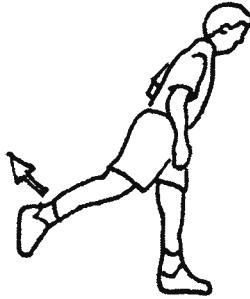
1. **Knee Lifts** – In a standing position, thrust the knee to the chest and then return it to its starting position. Lift the opposite arm at the same time the knee is coming towards the chest. Do for 20 seconds with each leg.



2. **High Kicks** – In a standing position, kick one leg up as high as possible while keeping the knee straight. Do for 20 seconds with each leg.



3. **Mule Kicks** – In a standing position, thrust one leg behind the body as high as possible while bending forward at the waist. Do for 20 seconds with each leg.

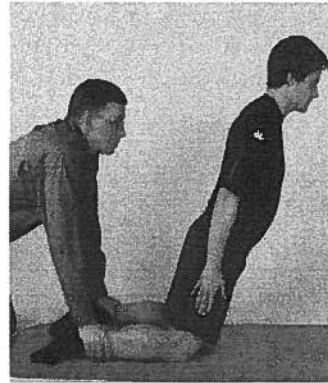
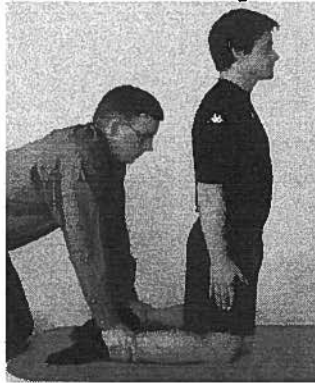


4. **Crossover/Side Kicks** – In a standing position, swing the leg out to the side as far as possible and then across the body. Do for 20 seconds with each leg.



Strengthening: These exercises target specific muscle groups and skills that are important in decreasing injury occurrence in soccer players. These are important to add to a workout at least 3 days a week.

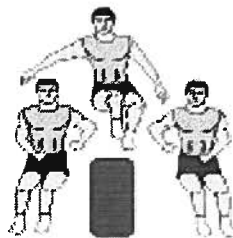
1. **Russian hamstrings** – Start in a kneeling position with a partner holding the back of the calf muscles. Keep the body upright and lean forward as far as possible. Make sure there is no bending at the hips. Return to the starting position. If done correctly, this exercise will be felt at the back of the thigh. Do 2 sets of 8 reps.



2. **Single leg stance** – Attempt to balance on one foot trying to minimize any excessive body movements. When this gets too easy, stand on a pillow or BOSU ball for an additional challenge. Do 2 minutes on each foot.



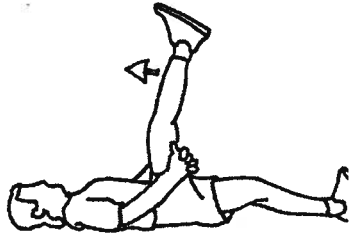
3. **Forward/Backward and Side/Side Barrier Jumps** – Stand next to a ball or cone with feet together. Jump forward and backward over the ball or cone. Do 2 sets of 20 seconds. Repeat jumping side to side for 2 sets of 20 seconds. Make sure to land with a good knee bend and keep the knees aligned over the toes. These should be done as quickly as possible without compromising proper form. May advance to single leg if proper form is maintained.



Stretches: Regular stretching is important throughout out, but is even more important in the growing athlete. During periods of growth, the muscles and tendons become tight and may contribute to a higher incidence of injury. It is

even more important to stretch during growth spurts. These stretches should be done at least after practice, but may be done before practice or other times during the day. Stretching 3 times a day is suggested to achieve flexibility gains during periods of growth.

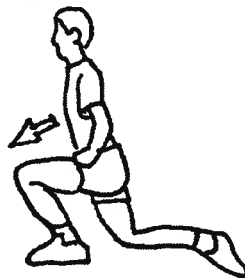
1. **Hamstrings** – Lying on the back with one hip bent to a right angle and the opposite leg extended straight out, attempt to straighten the knee until a mild stretch is felt in the back of the thigh. Do 3 sets of 30 seconds on each leg.



2. **Quadriceps** – Pull the knee toward the buttock, keeping the thighs and knees together. Without bending forward at the waist, pull the thigh backwards. A mild stretch in the front of the thigh should be felt. Do 3 sets of 30 seconds on each leg.



3. **Hip flexors** – In a kneeling position, gently push hips forward. Do not let the body bend forward, keep the shoulders over the hips. A mild stretch should be felt in the front of the hips. Do 3 sets of 30 seconds on each leg.

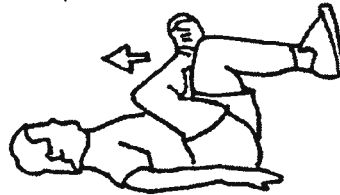


4. **IT band** – Lying on back, place the heel of the hip to be stretched on the opposite thigh just above the knee. Pull the knee across the body towards

the opposite shoulder until a mild stretch is felt on the side of the hip. Do 3 sets of 30 seconds on each leg.



5. **Piriformis**—Lying on back, bend hips and knees at a right angle. Cross one leg over the other and pull both knees toward chest until a mild stretch is felt in the buttock. Do 3 sets of 30 seconds on each leg.



6. **Gastroc/Soleus**—Stand at a wall with one foot in front of the other. Keeping the back knee straight, step forward with the opposite foot until a pull is felt in the back upper portion of the calf. Do 3 sets of 30 seconds on each foot. Then repeat this with the back knee bent about 30 degrees. Do 3 sets of 30 seconds on each foot.

