



**RECOGNIZE TO  
RECOVER**

Presented By **THORNE**

HOME **INJURY PREVENTION**

INJURY RECOVERY

HEAD & BRAIN CONDITIONS

EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS

CARDIAC CONDITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

NUTRITION & HYDRATION

Injury prevention is central to safe play. U.S. Soccer's Recognize to Recover program provides resources and guidance to help players fight off injury so they can stay on the field. Not all injuries can be avoided, but the severity and probability of injury can be reduced through proper conditioning, training routines and good sportsmanship, making the game of soccer safer for all who participate.

**Soccer injuries typically fall into two categories:**

- Those caused by use, such as muscle strains and joint pain
- Those resulting from a sudden forceful event, such as ankle sprains and knee injuries.

In order for any athlete to be at his or her very best, injury prevention and physical activity must go hand in hand. Athletic trainers play a critical role in preventing, identifying and treating injuries. U.S. Soccer's Recognize to Recover program highlights these health care professionals and how they help protect player health and safety.

## **RECOGNIZE**

Athletic trainers are health care professionals who collaborate with physicians to provide preventive services, emergency care, clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions. They work in a variety of settings including educational institutions, professional and amateur sports organizations, hospitals, clinics, corporate workplaces, public safety services, the military and performing arts. Athletic trainers must always work under the direction of a physician.

Athletic trainers must graduate from an accredited baccalaureate program and more than 70 percent have a master's degree or higher. Upon completion of an accredited athletic training education program, students become eligible for national certification by successfully completing the Board of Certification (BOC) examination. Athletic trainers are licensed or regulated in 49 states and

## **RECOVER**

Athletic trainers play an important role on your team. They help to protect your athletes from many sports-related injuries. They provide medical care and supervision during games and practices; rehabilitative services should an injury occur; and develop injury prevention programs to keep athletes healthy and on the field. They also provide injury prevention education during practice, one-on-one time with athletes and through regular communication with parents.

Having an athletic trainer on your team also helps support the decision of whether or not to put an athlete back into a game following injury. Based on his or her medical training, the athletic trainer can make this decision - allowing coaches to focus on coaching, the parents to focus on cheering and the athletes to focus on playing.

### **Did you know?**

the District of Columbia.

### **Athletic trainers are trained in:**

- Prevention, evaluation and rehabilitation of orthopedic injuries such as ACL sprains and cartilage tears in the knee
  - Manual therapy
  - Concussion management
  - Cardiac arrest
  - Heat stroke
  - Cervical spine injury
- U.S. Soccer requires an athletic trainer present at all U.S. Soccer Development Academy home games. A study from the American Academy of Pediatrics showed that the presence of athletic trainers can have a significant positive impact on student athlete health, resulting in lower injury rates, improved diagnosis and return-to-play decisions for concussion and other injuries.
  - 62 percent of all organized sports injuries occur during practice.
  - According to the CDC, many sports-related injuries are predictable and preventable

Equipment is there for a reason – to prevent injury. Players who do not wear protective equipment, or wear it incorrectly, are much more likely to get hurt. U.S. Soccer’s Recognize to Recover program provides resources and guidance to help players fight

off injury so they can stay on the field.

## RECOVER

### **Warm-up is critical.**

Players should spend at least 20 minutes stretching and warming up at the beginning of practice or before a game. Guided warm-ups prepare the body for more strenuous activities and may include a variety of exercises meant to stimulate the body and simulate game-play skills.

### **Training and strengthening**

Training and strengthening will enhance the body's natural protection systems, especially for ankles and knees. Muscles around the joints can be strengthened through consistent practice of specific training exercises, like walking lunges, single toe raises and single leg hops. The affected muscles stabilize the joint and reduce the risk of injury. The upper body can be strengthened to help protect players during challenges and shielding without sacrificing speed or agility.

### **Injury treatment and recovery**

Injury treatment and recovery are important for returning players to the field safely and preventing future injuries. Reducing swelling and pain as quickly as possible after an injury allows

## RECOGNIZE

### **All players should wear the following equipment and follow these tips for proper fit:**

- Shoes should fit properly and are laced tight each time.
- Appropriate shoes (and soles) should be worn for the field surface being played on.
- Shin guards should end just below the knee and fit snugly around the ankle bone.
- Socks should completely cover the shin guards.
- Soccer balls should be properly inflated, water-resistant and the correct size for the age group.

### **While some equipment is optional, players can consider the following to prevent against injury:**

- Goalkeepers should wear padded gloves with finger-protectors.
- Goalkeepers should wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, possibly with elbow and knee padding.
- Mouth guard is an option to protect teeth, lips and tongue.
- Jewelry should not be worn - except for a medical alert bracelet.

for faster recovery and evaluation by a doctor. After an injury, the muscle or joint will not be as strong as before the injury. A player returning to play without allowing the injury to completely heal and recover strength is at risk for a repetitive injury which is often more serious.

### **Remember RICE when treating a sprain or strain:**

- REST - keep off the injured ankle
- ICE - apply ice to the area for twenty minutes every hour; place a towel between the skin and ice, to prevent burns
- COMPRESSION - use a wrap to stabilize the injury; start at the toes and wrap up the leg past the ankle
- ELEVATION - raise the leg to help with swelling and pain; when elevating an injured ankle, remember "toes above the nose"

### **Did you know?**

- Ankle sprains are the most common soccer injury for players in high school and younger. Strengthening the ankle by using a balance board can help prevent ankle sprains.
- Learning proper technique when jumping and landing can prevent many non-contact injuries to knees and ankles.
- A 15-20 minute regeneration session after practice or a game speeds up the body's recovery.
- Strains - or pulled muscles - are common in soccer and can be avoided with a proper warm up and by stretching before and after practice or a game
- Hot spots on the feet are a precursor to blisters. Treat the hot spot as soon as it develops to prevent a blister from forming

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.

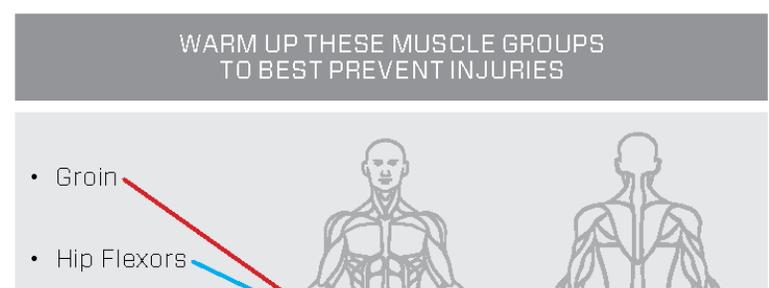
Warmup exercises typically concentrate on preparing the body for play. These physical activities target different muscles which are important for maximizing soccer performance. In doing so, the warmup also helps protect the player from injuring these different muscles.

## 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.

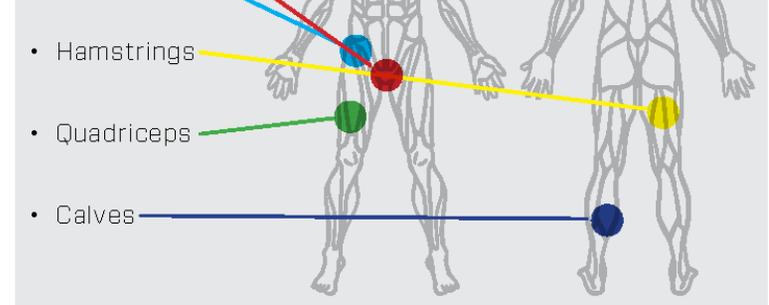
## Include a Ball

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.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



[Periodization for Youth Soccer](#)



[Warming Up](#)

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