

Are You Ready for Soccer Season?

Did you know there are specific risk factors for noncontact injuries in soccer? Many of the risk factors can be prevented, others such as gender or joint structure cannot. The risk factors that can be prevented include:

- Weak hip muscles
- Poor core stability
- Knee valgocity or an inward angle of your knees when performing certain activities

This program is designed to prevent injuries by decreasing these risk factors. It should be performed at least 3 days per week for maximum benefit. Here is a brief overview of the program:

Warm-up (50 yards each):

Light jog to loosen up

Instruction: Complete a slow jog from near to far sideline

Backward running

Instruction: Run backwards from sideline to sideline. Land on your toes without extending the knee. Stay on your toes and keep the knees slightly bent at all times.

Dynamic Warm-up (25 yds each):

Form drill with high knees and calf raise

Instruction: Walk forward, lifting your lead knee to waist height while keeping your back leg straight as you come off your toe performing a calf raise. Continue moving forward in this manner—alternating legs—while swinging your opposite arm in unison with your lead leg.

Form running skip

Instruction: Skip forward, lifting your lead knee to waist height while keeping your back leg straight as you come off your toe. Continue moving forward in this manner—alternating legs—and striking the ground with your mid-foot or forefoot while swinging your opposite arm in unison with your lead leg.

Butt kicks with hold

Instruction: Step forward, lifting your back heel up toward your buttock and hold for a two seconds. Continue moving forward in this manner, alternating legs. You can also perform this with more a hop, as if planting your lead foot to strike a ball.

Single leg bounding

Instruction: Start in an athletic stance with a slight bend at the knee.

Standing on your right leg, hop/bound forward landing on the ball of your foot bending at the knee. You want to maintain a slight bend to the knee. Then stand on the left leg and repeat the exercise.

Diagonal bounding

Instruction: Start in an athletic stance with a slight bend at the knee. Face forward and diagonally hop/bound to the right. Landing on your right foot and keeping your hip/knee/ankle in a straight line, hop/bound diagonally to the left. Continue alternating legs. Make sure that the outside leg does not cave in. Keep a slight bend to the knee and hip and make sure the knee stays over the ankle joint.

Dynamic Warm-Up with ball (25 yds each):

Side shuffle holding ball in front of chest (switch sides at 25 yds)

Instruction: Start in an athletic stance with a slight bend at the knee. Leading with the right foot, sidestep pushing off with the left foot (back leg). When you drive off with the back leg, be sure the hip/knee/ankle are in a straight line. Switch sides at half field.

Reverse lunges holding ball in front of chest

Instruction: Lunge backward leading with your right leg. Push off with your left leg and lunge backward with your left leg. Make sure that you keep your front knee over your ankle. Control the motion and try to avoid your knee from caving inward.

Backward walking single-leg Deadlift holding ball in front

Instruction: Begin to step backward leading with your right leg. Standing on your left leg, lean forward from the hip and reach the ball down toward the ground with your right leg straight out behind you. As you return to an upright position, complete the step backward with your right leg, and repeat.

Cool Down Stretching (60 sec each):

Quadriceps stretch

Instruction: Place your left hand on a partner's shoulder. Reach back with your right hand and grab the front of your right ankle. Bring your heel to buttock. Make sure your knee is pointed down toward the ground. Keep your right leg close to your left. Don't allow knee to wing out to the side and do not bend at the waist. Hold for 30 seconds and switch sides.

Hamstring stretch

Instruction: Sit on the ground with your right leg extended out in front of you. Bend your left knee and rest the bottom of your foot on your right inner thigh. With a straight back, try to bring your chest toward your knee. Do not round your back. If you can, reach down toward your toes and pull them up toward your head. Do not bounce. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat with the other leg.

Calf stretch

Instruction: Stand leading with your right leg. Bend forward at the waist and place your hands on the ground (V formation). Keep your right knee slightly bent and your left leg straight. Make sure your left foot is flat on the ground. Do not bounce during the stretch. Hold for 30 seconds. Switch sides and repeat.

Hip flexor stretch

Instruction: Lunge forward leading with your right leg. Drop your left knee down to the ground. Placing your hands on top of your right thigh, lean forward with your hips. The hips should be square with your shoulders. If possible, maintain your balance and lift back for the left ankle and pull your heel to your buttocks. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat on the other side.

Adductor stretch

Instruction: Get down on your forearms and knees. Slowly widen your knees out as far apart from each other as you can. Your ankles should be in line with your knees. Your shins should be parallel to one another and your ankles should be flexed. Hold for 60 seconds.