



Sports-specific warm up advice

Top tips from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

Whether you're a gym regular, or just taking up a new sport, you'll want to be sure that injury doesn't interrupt your fitness routine.

Chartered physiotherapists can help you avoid and manage sports injuries. They are experts in body movement and understand how muscles and joints work and why injuries can occur.

Physios suggest that warming up before working out or playing sport, and cooling down afterwards can help you avoid injury – especially if you build in a few exercises that help prepare your body for the type of activity you're about to undertake.

While the benefits of exercise strongly outweigh the risks, it's important to recognise that sports injuries can occur and can affect all joints, muscles and ligaments. The nature of the activity can determine which joints are most at risk. Tennis, for example, increases the risk of shoulder problems, whereas running and football can increase the likelihood of knee and ankle injuries.

General warm up:

By warming up before exercise you increase blood flow to muscles and other soft tissues gradually, which is an important factor in avoiding damage to ligaments, muscles, joints and tendons.

A general warm up should include five to ten minutes of light cardiovascular activity, such as fast walking or slow jogging, to increase your heart rate gradually, promote blood flow to your muscles and supply them with more oxygen.

Sports-specific warm up:

To properly prepare your muscles and increase your mobility, physiotherapists suggest any warm up routine should include time spent on performing the exercise you're about to undertake at a slow pace.

Typical examples include a slow jog for running, a gentle cycle for a spin class or a slow swim before building up speed in the pool.

Follow this with some sports-specific movements relevant to the activity you're about to perform. Try service motions for tennis, catching practice for cricket or side stepping for football

Top physio tips for a sports-specific warm up:

Basic physiotherapy advice on the principles of effectively warming up for some of the most popular forms of exercise is outlined below.

For more detailed information on these tips and how to prepare properly for exercise, seek the advice of a chartered physiotherapist in your area www.physio2u.co.uk

Tennis

Shoulder, hip and knee injuries are common amongst tennis players. Mimic the movements of tennis, including high-steps, arm circles, serves and racket swings in a controlled manner. Also try...

Lunge walk – Move forwards with your legs in a long, exaggerated stride pattern. Keep your upper body straight but move your arms in time with your legs.

Buttock kicks – At slow jogging pace, bring your heels up to meet your bottom.

Jumping high and from side to side.

Rotating your torso from side to side.

Football

Knees and ankle injuries are common amongst footballers. In addition to your cardiovascular warm up, aim to build the following moves into your preparation...

Lunge walk – Move forwards with your legs in a long, exaggerated stride pattern. Keep your upper body straight but move your arms in time with your legs.

Side stepping / sideways running – This movement will help to stretch the hips and inner thighs.

Running backwards – Carefully running backwards can help prepare the quad and calf muscles before you begin to play.

Buttock kicks – At slow jogging pace, bring your heels up to meet your bottom.

Chest hugs – Bring your knees up and hug them towards your chest

Running/Jogging:

Knee, ankle and foot injuries are common amongst runners. In addition to your cardiovascular warm up, try the following...

Lunge walk – Move forwards with your legs in a long, exaggerated stride pattern. Keep your upper body straight but move your arms in time with your legs.

Buttock kicks – At slow jogging pace, bring your heels up to meet your bottom.

Controlled leg swings – Standing on your left leg swing your right leg backwards and forwards in a controlled manner. Swap legs.

Fast feet – Stand with your feet together, and then lift them quickly off the floor one after the other as if running over hot coals.

Cycling

Knee and lower back problems are common amongst cyclists. Before you get on your bike, jog on the spot, jump from side to side, lunge forwards and back and then try the following move while lying on the floor...

Bring your knees up towards your chest and perform slow paced pedalling movements with your legs.

Once you're on your bike begin pedalling at a moderate pace, increasing speed and intensity until you reach your desired pace.

Cooling down after exercise

Taking the time to cool down after exercise is important and helps:

- your heart and breathing rates return towards resting levels gradually
- prevent you feeling faint or dizzy
- remove waste products from your muscles which can result in muscle soreness
- prepare your body for your next exercise session.

Cool down by gradually slowing the pace and effort you're putting into your chosen form of exercise. Keep going at this reduced pace for five to ten minutes. Another option is to slow jog, brisk walk, or march on the spot for the same length of time.

The activities suggested in this simple guide should not cause any harm. If you do experience pain or discomfort, stop immediately and speak to a health professional, such as a chartered physiotherapist or your GP.

If you require further advice on sports-specific warm ups or how to exercise safely with an existing injury, or condition, please seek the advice of a chartered physiotherapist www.physio2u.org.uk

For more information

about physiotherapy visit the CSP website at: www.csp.org.uk

For more information

on joint health and exercising with arthritis visit: www.arthritisresearchuk.org