

SOCCKER WARM-UP

I. The term "Warm-Up" may mean different things to different people. For some it means brief stretching, and for others it is vigorous exercise leading to perspiration and breathlessness. There exists no one warm-up routine that serves as the proper preparation for all activities. One needs, therefore, to select and adjust warm-up activities to suit the type of exercise he/she plans to engage in. **The mental part of a warm-up is equally as important as the physical part.**

II. The purpose of a warm-up period before a soccer practice or game is to prepare your body, both **physically** and **mentally** for the activity. While you are warming up, you are stretching your muscles and you are also turning your focus to the practice or game, which is about to begin.

- I suggest general warm-up with children ages 5-9, i.e. jumping jacks, leg stretches, push ups etc. Use game skills (juggling, dribbling, passing/trapping...) and strength and stretching exercises (preferably with ball) for older children. The warm-up may last for 7-12 minutes (shorter on hot days and longer on cold days). **Avoid sprints and all out kicking and punting.** A good combined warm-up that incorporates a review of fundamental skills may take as long as 15 minutes.

III. One of the most obvious advantages of a warm-up procedure, prior to a heavy-duty practice session or game, is the decrease of injury risk--especially during all-out performances. In addition, proper warm-up and stretching will increase the range of movement in joint action, will enhance muscle strength and/or endurance, will improve skill and coordination, and will help you adjust to variable conditions, such as uneven or moist surface, windy conditions, angle of sun light etc.

Things You'll Need: Soccer Balls

Step 1. Take your time. A proper soccer warm-up takes about 10 minutes for younger children and 10 to 15 minutes for older children.

Step 2. Consider the conditions. A warm-up may be shorter during hot weather or on soccer tournament days, which include numerous games.

Step 3. Incorporate all soccer skills. In addition to stretching, a warm-up should be soccer-specific and should duplicate aspects of the game, such as dribbling, passing and shooting.

Step 4. Make sure goalkeepers have their own warm-up. It should incorporate all the skills of that position.

Step 5. Keep warmed up. Do not let the body go cold after the warm-up. Players should be urged to keep moving (for instance, by stretching in place) during the frequent breaks in play.

Step 6. Wear proper clothing. Players should have layers that they can easily shed or put on.

Step 7. Take it easy. Do not use too much energy during a warm-up, or allow players to compete with one another. Don't warm-up too early prior to a game and have your players cool down.

- Educate your child. A proper warm-up is one of the most important aspects of sports and exercise. When stretching, teach the proper names of the muscles, such as hamstrings, quadriceps and so forth.
- Help your coach. If you notice there is an insufficient or improper warm-up, suggest (don't insist or attack) that players take a few minutes to stretch before practice and games.
- Set an example. If your child is not part of an organized team warm-up, do some independent stretching. Others will likely catch on.
- Do it together. Warm up by practicing ball skills with your child. Stretch with your child, or practice "buddy stretching," in which you assist your child in doing the stretches.
- Volunteer to warm up your goalkeeper. In this case, an extra pair of hands can be useful to the coach, who may be busy warming up field players.