



Stretching for Young Athletes

Dynamic Stretching

Warming up before any workout increases performance and reduces risk for potential injury. Dynamic warm-ups use sports-specific movements to increase tissue flexibility, blood flow and heart rate. When warming up, it's important to start with less-powered, less-skilled movements and progress to higher-powered, complex skill movements. Remember, warming up requires proper execution!

Here are seven dynamic warm-ups that will help your athletes get off on the right foot:

Toe Walk/Heel Walk

Walk on your toes with straight legs. The heel of the foot should not touch the ground the entire time. At the mid-point, change to a heel walk, walking on the heels with straight legs. The toe should not touch the ground.

Straight Leg March

Walk forward, raising each leg as high as possible in front of you without bending the knees or leaning forward or backward. The body should remain upright and facing forward.

Hand Walk (or Bear Walk)

Bend at the waist and place your hands on the ground. Keeping the legs and back straight, walk on your hands and feet, keeping the legs hip- or shoulder-width apart.

Forward Lunge

Step out with one leg as far as possible. Bending the knees, lower your back leg toward the ground, stopping just before the knee touches it. Keep the front knee in line with your ankle. Lift back up and step forward with your back leg, bringing the feet back to starting position. Repeat with the opposite leg.

Backward Lunge

Step backward, landing on the ball of the foot so the stationary knee is in line with the ankle. Lower your body by bending the knees. Using the rear leg, lift the stationary leg back bringing feet together. Repeat with the opposite leg.

Leg Cradle

Keeping the body upright, lift one leg in front of the body, bending at the knee. Rotate the knee outward and the foot inward. Hold foot with both hands for 3 seconds, standing on one leg. Place the foot down in front to move forward. Repeat with the other leg.

Dog & Bush Walk

Rotate one leg out at the hip, bend the knee and lift the leg up and over an imaginary bush or obstacle. Remain facing forward keeping the shoulders and hips square. Repeat with other leg, moving forward with each step.