

SAINT FRANCIS SPORTS MEDICINE

Making athletes of all ages BETTER, STRONGER, FASTER since 1995.

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Dynamic Warm-ups Outperform Static Stretching

One of the lesser-known components of preparing for workouts and competition is proper warm-up, particularly for younger athletes who may not understand the injury risk associated with starting out cold. The definition of what constitutes a good warm-up has changed as well, with light jogging and static stretches giving way to a more dynamic warm-up routine that cranks up the heart rate and coordinates the body's moving parts.

“Dynamic warm-up exercises involve slow, controlled movements rather than holding a single stretch position for several seconds,” explains Lance Eaker, MS, ATC, CKTP, certified athletic trainer at Saint Francis Medical Center. “These types of movements, along with sufficient cardiovascular activity to increase the heart rate, are more effective in preparing the body for high-intensity activity than old-fashioned static stretching.”



Lance Eaker,
MS, ATC, CKTP

Warming up with movements similar to those outlined on the back page also helps reduce the risk of injury. In fact, some studies indicate static stretches actually may increase the risk of injury because the elongation process causes the muscle to lose a portion of its power.

“Putting your body at risk is the last thing you want to do before competing or performing a hard workout,” Eaker says. “Static stretching still has its place in terms of increasing flexibility, but it falls short of generating the movements necessary to prepare the body for competition. Dynamic warm-ups can train the muscles and nerves to work together better than static stretching.”

For more information on dynamic warm-ups that may be appropriate for your sport, please call the Sports Medicine team at Saint Francis Medical Center at **573-331-5153**.

Fall 2012 Coaches Clinic Set for October 18

Robert Stutman, former Special Agent with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, will speak on prescription drug abuse in athletes as the featured presenter at the Fall 2012 Coaches Clinic October 18 at Saint Francis Medical Center.

Chris Nowinski, co-founder and president of the Sports Legacy Institute, will provide an update on sports-related concussions. The clinic will take place from 8 am-1:30 pm in the Fitness Plus multipurpose room, Entrance 8.

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Dynamic Warm-up Exercises Get the Motor Running

Since the goal of a dynamic warm-up is getting the athlete's body ready for action, it makes sense to approximate the movements and intensity needed during pre-performance preparation. An effective warm-up routine challenges every part of the body, including the cardiovascular system.

"There is a wide variety of exercises to choose from, so the key is identifying some that are appropriate for your specific sport," says Lance Eaker, MS, ATC, CKTP, certified athletic trainer at Saint Francis Medical Center. "As a general rule, focus on movements that activate multiple muscle groups and elevate the heart rate. Consider this a requirement of high performance, not an optional addition."

Here are a few exercises to consider for a general dynamic warm-up routine. The objective is to start slowly and build up the level of intensity:

Feet and ankles – With your shoes off, walk several lengths of a carpeted floor first on your toes, then the heels, then the outside of the feet, then the inside of the feet. This has the added benefit of strengthening the lower legs to help prevent shin splints.

Glutes and hips – Perform a bridge by lying on your back with knees bent; use your glutes to raise the hips to form a straight line with the knees and shoulders. Keep the hips parallel to the ground and hold for a few seconds, then repeat 10 times. Add in some lateral lunges beginning from a standing position. Squat down, then shift to the right while keeping your left leg straight. Repeat the other direction and do 10 reps.

Shoulders – Do windmills in both directions; start with small circles and increase the range as you progress.

Hamstrings and hips – Perform a high-knee walk, lifting the knees as high as possible. Add a leg hug on the lifted leg, just below the knee. Stand tall and hold the position briefly before switching legs. Next, lunge forward, making sure to maintain posture and balance. Reach up with the arm of the lower leg, then forward to the outside of the forward leg to obtain a rotational stretch. Hold for a few seconds, then face forward again and return to a standing position by firing your glutes and hamstrings. Repeat a few times on both legs.

Another option is to perform a lunge walk. Maintain posture while slowly moving forward into a lunge position. Add a controlled trunk rotation to activate the core. The improved balance created with this exercise generates additional benefits.

Cardio – Traditional jumping jacks are a low-impact exercise to get the heart pumping. Add in some rapid response reps, flexing your knees slightly while running in place and tapping the toes on the floor. Pump your arms quickly to simulate a sprint. Do these in short bursts for 10 seconds. Progress by adding diagonal steps and side foot taps, all while maintaining spine posture and central balance.

Putting it all together – Extend your arms to the side and move laterally, crossing one leg in front of the other while moving one direction, then back the other direction. Add in a few seconds of rapid response exercise, pump the arms forward, and run forward at a quick tempo. Runners will want to do a few minutes of controlled strides and race-pace tempo running to finalize the warm-up and hit the starting line with their engines in gear.

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