

Why Warm-Up?

by Robyn Roddy

If you participate in sports, you run the inevitable risk of suffering an injury. It is estimated that approximately 28 million American children ages 6 - 16 play organized sports out of school, and over 25 million play in competitive school sports. According to the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 775,000 children under age 15 are treated every year in hospital emergency rooms in the United States for sports injuries. The number of sports-related injuries involving children ages 5 - 14 years includes:

Sport	Organized Activities	Unorganized & Informal Activities
Football	61,139	117,057
Basketball	55,869	165,355
Baseball	53,112	115,948
Soccer	28,165	40,978
Hockey	21,311(combined)	
Gymnastics	13,588	21,183
Volleyball	7,530	14,688

(Source:<http://www.cramersportsmed.com/injury.htm>)

According to the American College of Sports Medicine, up to one-half of the injuries that are sustained in organized sports are preventable. Many injuries are due to overuse of immature bones and muscles. Exercises that develop flexibility of the muscles will reduce the risk of injury by preventing the muscle from fatiguing easily. Warm-ups and stretching before each competition or practice increase the muscle temperature making muscles more elastic and flexible. The preparation phase before any strenuous exercise is the Warm-Up. It prepares the athlete both psychologically and physically at the beginning of the workout. Remember, always warm-up with light exercise before stretching the muscles. Minor injuries can lead to chronic nagging pain and predispose the athlete to more severe injuries. Strains, sprains, cramps, pulled muscles or a broken bone can lead to the end of a season. It has been shown that appropriate strength training decreases the incidence of some overuse and acute injuries. To avoid injury, each practice session and game should be preceded by 5 to 10 minutes of warm up exercises and followed by a cool down period including stretching the muscles. Sports medicine experts agree that thorough preparation is truly one of the keys to success. Athletes must grasp the value and physiological benefits that occur with the warming and lengthening of a muscle.