

Why should we warm-up? Physical preparation.

Too many times I have seen individuals or groups moving through a warm-up in a casual manner. This often ends in the individual not being properly prepared for the physical activity and can lead to injury. As parents, coaches, referees and teammates we should always watch, assist and encourage athletes to perform proper warm-up. Proper supervision is ideal but the most important aspect of a warm-up is that the individual perform the warm-up activities with the goal of increasing blood flow and preparing muscles for activity.

Coaches usually supervise a team warm-up to make sure that their players are prepared for participation. Has anyone ever explained how to and why a physical warm-up is recommended? The simple answer is that physical participation is a stress on our muscles and preparing for physical activity helps to prevent injury.

From a physical aspect, warming up increases the blood flow and oxygen to the muscles and tendons which you will be primarily using, increases overall body temperature, muscles which are loose & warm are more flexible resulting in less likelihood of being injured and a more prepared cardiovascular system allows for the increased demands of physical activity.

A proper warm-up has been debated for decades regarding a static stretch, ballistic stretch &/or a dynamic warm-up.

1. Static stretching is when you move the joint to an end of motion position and hold it for a set of time, usually 30-60 seconds. A pulling/stretching sensation is felt in the target muscles.
2. Ballistic stretching is a "bouncing" stretch. This is controversial due to the fact that you can "bounce" too far in the motion, causing injury to the muscles.
3. Dynamic stretching is a controlled movement activity such as light jogging, high knees, arm circles. These can target sport specific motions & muscle groups.

While opinions vary, it is generally thought that a controlled dynamic stretch followed by a static stretch period then a more intense dynamic & sport/position is best.