

Exercises to Prevent Soccer Injuries

A good soccer player needs many qualities – not just speed and adept ball-handling, but agility for quick movements, strength to effectively tackle and create pressure, and other skills besides. It's no wonder that soccer is such a physically demanding game, and players inherently risk various kinds of injury. The knees, ankles, and hamstrings are especially vulnerable on the soccer pitch. But that doesn't mean getting hurt is inevitable or that there's nothing you can do about it. In fact, training with the correct kinds of exercise is the most reliable way to avoid getting injured while playing soccer.

At JAG Physical Therapy, [New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania's multi-specialty PT source](#), we're passionate about helping athletes stay healthy and perform their best. Given the rising popularity of soccer within our region, we have a great deal of experience working with both outfield players and goalkeepers. We focus on both injury prevention and return-to-sport rehabilitation if you do get hurt. Our [athletic training services](#) are ideal for soccer teams and all other athletic organizations who are concerned about the musculoskeletal health and performance of their players. [Schedule an appointment now, contact JAG PT](#) to inquire

further, or read more below about effective conditioning exercises for soccer players.

What Are the Best Exercises to Prevent Soccer Injuries?

Depending on the position you play, the injuries you have previously dealt with, and other factors, your physical therapist will recommend a unique regimen of soccer injury prevention exercises. However, on a basic level, the following four exercises are commonly used for this purpose and will help improve your general condition for soccer. They all are aimed at one or both of two important purposes: increasing lower body flexibility and building up the core muscles.

Lunges with Twists: This variant on the basic, fundamental lunge adds one movement for a host of benefits: Better balance, core flexibility, and a deeper hip stretch. As with a regular lunge, step forward with one foot and make a right angle with your knee while extending your back leg and lowering your body. Then twist your torso at the midsection towards the side of your forward leg, squeezing your core muscles as you do so. Your knees should not move during this

portion. Move your body back to center, step out of the lunge, then alternate and repeat.

Single-Leg Deadlifts: A challenging bodyweight exercise, single-leg deadlifts simultaneously work on the hamstrings and glutes, which is ideal for preventing thigh as well as knee injuries. To do this exercise, stand with your feet hip-width apart and shift your weight onto one foot while slightly bending the knee. Thrust the other leg backward as you lean forward, arms reaching out until your upper body and back leg are parallel to the floor, similar to warrior III pose in yoga. To return to standing, raise your chest at the same time you lower your back leg. Alternate and repeat an equal number of times on each side.

Side Lunges: You may also know side lunges as lateral lunges. Under any name, this exercise is a simple way to train faster lateral movement as well as fortify the knees and hips against injury. Moreover, this is an effective way to build balance. Starting with your feet hip-width apart, step widely to one side, keeping the toes of both feet facing forward and soles flat. As you step, bend the knee of the active leg and push your hips back, as though you're sitting down with just one side. Return to center by pushing with the active foot, then switch and repeat.

Planks with Leg Lifts: A small leg movement adds a lot to the well-known plank exercise, greatly increasing core and hip

stabilization. While in plank position – lifting yourself off the ground with your forearms and toes – keep your body still as you raise one leg back to the height of your torso. Let your leg stay parallel to your body for a few seconds before you slowly return to a regular plank and then alternate sides.

Why Is Flexibility Important in Preventing Soccer Injuries?

Every soccer player knows the scary feeling of getting awkward footing, slipping on muddy turf, and going down in pain. The chief worry at that moment is a strain, sprain, or other tissue damage. But while there's no way to absolutely prevent this, high flexibility in the hamstrings, hip flexors, and calf muscles make injury much less likely. Simply put, well-stretched muscles and connective tissue can take more force without tearing. Leg stretches and flexibility drills that work on multiple areas at once are well-suited for soccer – these include sumo squats, open-and-close the gate drills, and standing calf and quad stretches.

How Can Strengthening the Core Help Prevent Soccer Injuries?

Sometimes it's not how fast you move that makes a difference on the soccer field, but how well you can stop. A strong core is one of the most effective forms of defense from practice and game-related injuries. It'll allow you to brace for impact better, absorb a fall with less pain, and overall provide a layer of protection to all the joints in your torso. Moreover, a well-trained lower back and hips will help you to put more effort into running and making plays on the ball without risking a strain. Top core exercises for soccer players include leg raises for the abdominals (as well as several leg muscles), box squats for the hips, hamstrings, and calves, and planks for the overall core and improving the sense of balance.

How Can Soccer Players Benefit from Proper Warm-Up and Cool-Down Routines?

Most athletes are very familiar with the idea that easing into high-intensity movement via warm-ups is the best thing to do.

But equally important is cooling down after exerting yourself, for a similar basic reason: It reduces pain and cuts down on the likelihood of injury.

As a soccer player, your warm-up routine will primarily involve the lower body, but you shouldn't neglect your other musculoskeletal regions, especially your back. Your hips and waist are the starting points of many important maneuvers on the soccer field, so basic forms of dynamic stretching including walking lunges and the 90/90 hip stretch should be used regularly. Mobility exercises like hip circles and leg swings as well as back-and-hip stretches like the bridge exercise are also important.

While cooling down, take note of any muscles or joints that feel especially tired or sore and gently stretch those using the same methods you would in warm-ups. You should also do a gradual cardiovascular cooldown, such as with slow jogging, and you can avoid stiffness by not staying in one position for too long after a soccer practice or game.

Get Personalized Injury Prevention Plans at JAG Physical Therapy

You want your soccer season to be successful – not cut short by injury. Protect yourself from getting hurt by consulting the skilled and empathetic PT professionals at JAG Physical Therapy. We'll work with you and listen to you to develop the most effective soccer injury prevention plan for your situation. [Book an appointment online](#) to get started on a better, healthier season of playing soccer.