

GET READY TO PLAY THE PROFESSIONAL WAY



The New Zealand Soccer Warm-up

Warming up before playing football is crucial, to help you perform at your best and to reduce your risk of injury. A good warm-up should be performed before all training and games so that you're ready for action as soon as the whistle blows.

The New Zealand Soccer (NZS) Pre-Match Warm-Up provides a step-by-step, mental and physical preparation plan for you and your team. It should start easy and get progressively harder until you reach game intensity. To help you, we've split the warm-up into 4 phases:



PHASE 1 – 40 minutes to go...

LIGHT AEROBIC ACTIVITY (5-10 minutes)

WHY? - To raise your heart rate, increase blood flow and warm your muscles.

Perform as a group, either around the outside of the field or across the pitch. Include:

Jogging

Side-stepping

Jockeying (fwd/bwd)

Cross-over steps

Skipping

Heel flicks

High knees

360° turns



PHASE 2 – 30 minutes to go...

STRETCHING (5-10 minutes)

WHY? - To prepare the body for the positions it may have to get into during play.

Stretching before play should be 'dynamic' (which means the body parts are moving). Only use 'static' stretches if you have some specific muscle tightness.

At the end of Phase 1, slow down to a walk and perform 10 of the following actions (5 on each leg) with a couple of steps in between:

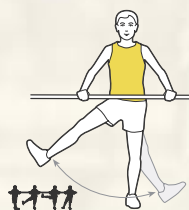
High kicks

Hurdle step-overs 1. (knee out, up, in and down)

Donkey kicks (behind)

Hurdle step-overs 2. (knee up, out and down)

Then, perform 10 repetitions of the following exercises on each side of the body, holding on to a partner if necessary. Gradually increase the speed and range of movement.



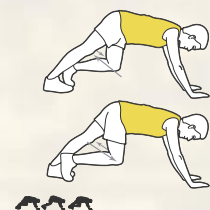
Leg swings
(forward/backwards, side/side)



Trunk rotations



Hurdle step-overs
(in and out)



Calf stretches

Finish with some walking lunges and sideways lunges (10 on each leg for both).



PHASE 3 – 20 minutes to go...

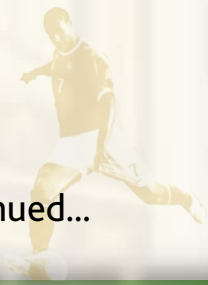
BALL WORK (5-10 minutes)

WHY? - To get a feel for the ball and the pitch. Keep moving so that all the good work of the first 2 phases isn't lost. Include:

- Skills practice in pairs (volleying, heading, chest control, etc).
- Passing (start short, progress to long) and movement drills.
- Position specific drills – crossing, shooting, shot stopping, etc.
- Small-sided games.

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continued...



ready



PHASE 4 – 10 minutes to go...

HIGH INTENSITY WORK (5 minutes) – Starting 11 only

WHY? - To get ready for the intensity of the game. A 100% effort could be required within seconds of the start – muscle strains are common in the first period of the game when players aren't completely ready.

- a) Line up on the touch line and jog across the pitch, increasing the pace to 70% of your maximum as you cross the middle third. On the way back, repeat, but at 85% effort. Go again and include an all-out sprint across the middle third and then walk/jog back.
- b) After a 30 second rest, sprint on the spot, pumping your arms and legs as fast as possible and then randomly sprint forwards, backwards, diagonally left or diagonally right 5-10 metres. Then slow down and resume sprinting on the spot. Repeat 4 to 5 times across the width of the pitch.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q Should I use the ball during the first part of the warm-up?

A This is an option, although your coach may not have enough balls for one each. However, your skill level needs to be such that you can keep control of the ball while keeping the warm-up at the right intensity (i.e. low). No shots on goal should be taken until everyone is fully warmed up. This is a common cause of muscle strain before a game has even begun.

Q If static stretches have to be performed, when is best?

A When you experience tightness, but always after you've warmed up your muscles. Static stretching should not interfere with any other aspect of the warm-up so do it while other players are taking a drink at the end of a phase.

Q Why are static stretches before play not recommended?

A Because they have not been shown to reduce the risk of injury and may limit your performance in activities such as jumping and sprinting.

Q What are the benefits of dynamic stretches?

A They safely and progressively move limbs into positions that they may adopt (at high speed) during play. They also reduce muscle stiffness, which is thought to reduce injury risk.

Q Should soccer players ever perform static stretches?

A Yes. Flexibility is really important in football and it is static stretching which improves this aspect of fitness. Static stretches of all major muscles, held for at least 20 seconds as part of the cool-down and on a daily basis as part of a flexibility training programme, are highly recommended.

Q What do I do if I'm a substitute?

A Keep your tracksuit and other outer wear on to stay warm. Every 10-15 minutes, perform phases 1 and 2 in a shortened form. When you know you're going to go on, perform some high intensity movements (like those in phase 4) along the touchline.

For more information on preparation for football, contact Helen Tunstall at New Zealand Soccer on 09 414 0174 or email helent@soccernz.co.nz