

Athletes and ACLs: Giving your knees the attention (and prevention) they deserve

[MoveForwardPT.com reports](https://www.moveforwardpt.com/reports) that preventative physical therapy programs have proven to lower ACL injury rates by 41% for female soccer players. [Preventative programs](#) are designed to improve balance, strength and sports performance and aim to strengthen your core, thigh and leg muscles.

Dynamic Warm Up

Warming up your body and stretching (in that order) can ensure your knee is resistant to tearing and overstretching. Feel free to add in some jogging in place between each dynamic move.

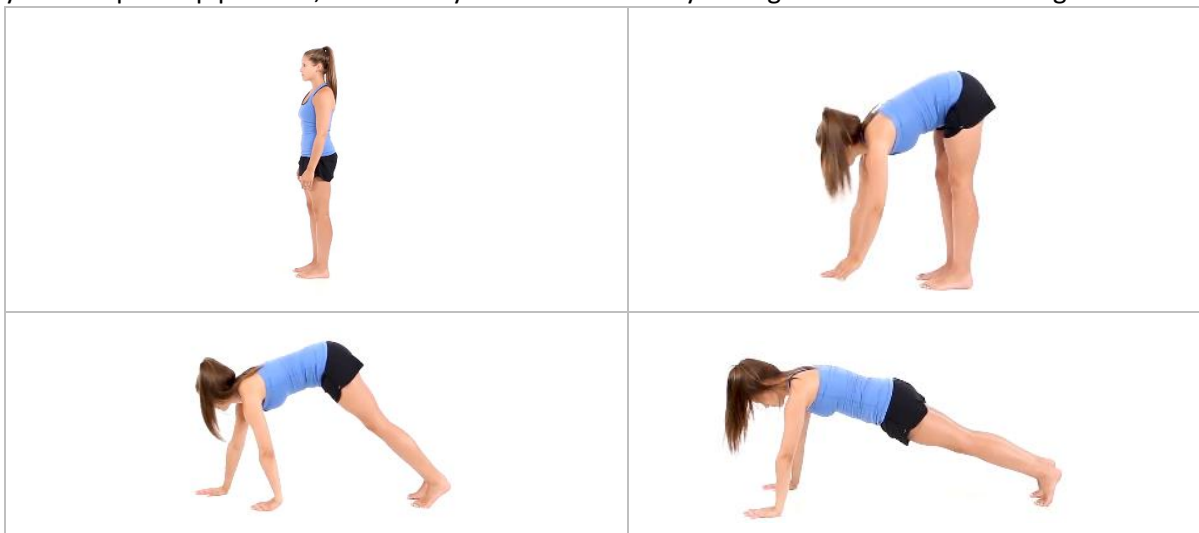
Walking toe touches (Frankensteins) | 10 steps | Warms Up: Hamstrings

Hold your arms out, parallel with the floor. As you take a step, kick your leg up to your opposite hand, keeping your leg straight. Lower your foot to the ground. Do the same on the next step.

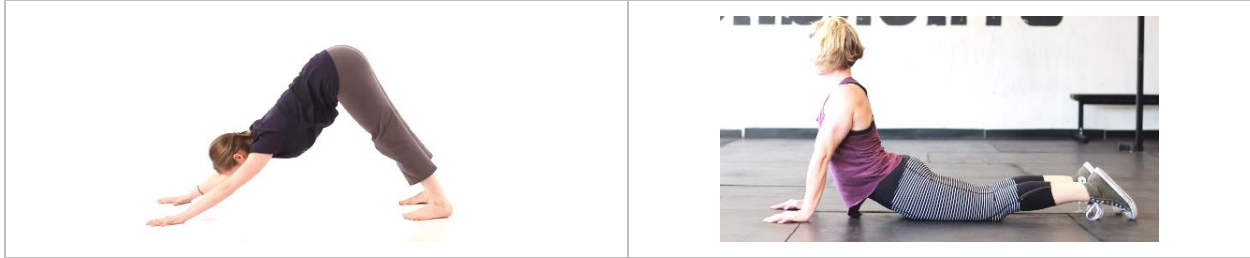


Inch Worms | Repeat 10x | Warms Up: Lower Back

Start from standing, fold over at the hips until your hands reach the floor. Walk your hands out until you're in push up position, then walk your hands back to your legs and return to standing.



Up Down dog | Repeat 10x, hold down and up positions for 5 sec each | Warms Up: Lower Back
Begin in downward facing dog, splitting your weight between your hands and feet. On an inhale, shift your weight to your hands and drive your hips down and forward, pushing your chest out and up. On your next exhale, lift your hips and push back up to downward facing dog.

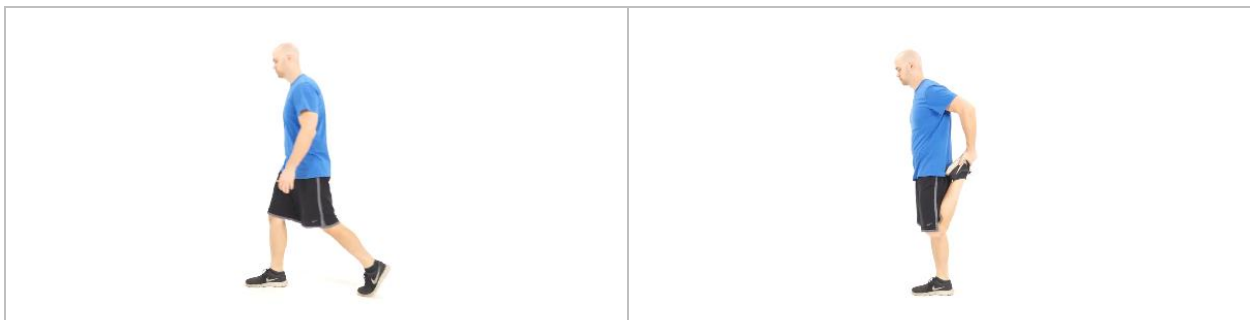


Side Lunge | 10 on each side | Warms Up: Inner Thigh and Groin






Stand with your legs about shoulder-width apart. Lunge your right leg to the side, bending your knee and lowering your body until your thigh is parallel with the floor. Push back up to center and lunge in the opposite direction with the opposite leg.



Walking Quad Stretch | 10 steps, holding the stretch for 5 seconds each step | Warms Up: Quads
With each step you take, kick your heel back to your butt. Grab your ankle to deepen each stretch, holding it for five seconds, then releasing. Repeat with the opposite foot.




Post-Warm Up Stationary Stretches | Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat 3x.

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| <p> Child's Pose <i>Stretches: Lower back</i> Start on all fours. Sink your butt back down onto your heels while keeping your hands still. Focus on rounding out the back. Breathe deeply. </p>  | <p> Stationary Toe Touches <i>Stretches: Hamstrings</i> Standing still, fold your body at the waist and reach your fingers to your toes. </p>  | <p> Butterfly Stretch <i>Stretches: Groin</i> Sit on the floor with your legs in front of you, knees bent and feet together. Sit up straight. Gently lean forward to deepen the stretch. </p>  |
| <p> Stationary Quad Stretch <i>Stretches: Quad</i> Bring your foot to your butt, grabbing your ankle with your hand. Repeat with the opposite leg. </p>  | <p> Stationary Calf Stretch <i>Stretches: Calf</i> Stand with your hands on a chair or the wall, with one foot in front and one behind. Keep your back heel touching the ground as you lean your body forward, until you feel a stretch in your calf. </p>  | |

Work on balance

Working on your balance helps your knees and body learn where they are in space and how to react when thrown off.

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| <p> One Leg Balance on Foam 30 seconds, 3x Stand with one leg on the mat, letting your opposite leg hang beside it, foot off the floor. You can make this harder by closing your eyes, putting your opposite leg bent behind or in front of your body, or you can even do a single-leg squat while making sure your knee does not collapse inward. </p> |  |
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Do Plyometric training

Plyometric training that focuses on using maximum muscle strength for a short period. The main goal is to increase power. Remember to land quietly when you do the following exercises.

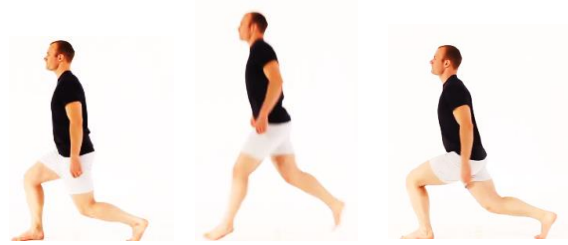
Box jumps | 8-10 reps, 3x

Face the box, squatting slightly with knees apart. Make sure you're sitting into the squat and your knees don't go past your toes. Jump up and forward onto box, landing with bended knees. Step down off the step and repeat.



Jump Lunges | 16-20 reps, 3x

Start in a lunge, with a straight back. Make sure your front knee is not going past your toes. Jump up straight into the air and as you're in the air switch your legs and land in a lunge with your legs in the opposite position. Each time you land is one rep.



Squat jumps | 8-10 reps, 3x

Lower into squat position with legs shoulder-width apart. Make sure you're sitting into the squat and your knees don't go past your toes. From the squat position, jump straight up as high as you can. Land with a slightly bent knees and lower back into a squat immediately.



Line jumps | 16-20 reps, 3x

With a slight bend in your knees, jump over a line directly in front of you, trying to keep your knees high as you do. Land with a slight bend to your knee.

