

Warm Up and Recovery

WARM UP

The first part of every training session or preparation for competition should be the warm up. Warming up is an important aspect of injury prevention and in preparing athletes both physically and mentally for the activity ahead. The ideal warm up will:

- Help to raise body temperature and increase heart rate.
- Prepare muscles and joints for the activity to follow.
- Begin with general activities and be followed by sport-specific / event-specific exercises.
- Be relevant to the age, ability and experience of the athlete.

Individuals will have different needs in a warm up. It is also worth noting that a warm up for a practice session may differ considerably to a warm used before a competition.

Depending on the age of the athlete, some general principles to follow are:

- The warm up should be very active and time efficient.
- Begin with general, full body movements such as jogging, skipping, side-stepping, etc.
- Gradually and systematically increase the intensity and specificity of the warm up.
- Pay particular attention to actively mobilising the body parts primarily involved in the upcoming activity, eg. Legs and hips for hurdles; arms and shoulders for throws.
- Conclude with some event specific drills and even some lower intensity rehearsals of the full skill.

RECOVERY

i) Cool Down

After a training session or competition, athletes should not stop and rest immediately, but continue to exercise lightly and gently for 10-20 minutes. This will ease the body temperature and heart rate back to pre-exercise levels, and reduce the onset of muscle soreness and stiffness that can develop up to 48 hours after the training or competition has been completed.

The activities used during a cool down can include 10-20 minutes of low to moderate-intensity exercise such as walking, slow jogging or basic skills.

ii) Stretching

Post-exercise stretching also helps muscles and tendons to recover and is important in preventing muscle soreness. Stretching after a cool down, and even over the next 24 hours will get the best results.

iii) Refuelling

To recover properly, athletes need food to top up energy stores and to help repair any sore or damaged muscles. For best results, within half an hour of finishing exercise, an athlete should be consuming healthy food and drink.

iv) Rehydration

Body fluids are lost through sweat, so quickly replacing fluid is very important. In the 2-3 hours after exercise, young athletes should be encouraged to drink plenty of fluids.