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The Best Soccer Prehab Exercises For Injury Prevention

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[P]rehab | Last Updated: September 7, 2022

Soccer is the world's most popular sport and demonstrates continued growth in the United States each year. Over 13 million Americans play soccer, and according to US Youth Soccer, there are over 3 million youth soccer players registered in the United States today. Although there are benefits to playing soccer such as improved cardiovascular health, strength, and self-esteem, there are also some inherent risks involved. One study found that there were over 2.4 million soccer-related injuries leading to an Emergency Room visits between the years 2000 and 2012. Another study showed that soccer is the high school sport with the highest



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based soccer prehab exercises to help prevent these injuries!

Why Soccer Prehab Exercises?

Unfortunately, injuries are a part of sports. When it comes to elite soccer players, the average time missed from playing is about 2 weeks while the burden of the injury can last up to 6 weeks (4)! As we like to say, **the best rehab is [P]Rehab** and if we can reduce the risk of common soccer injuries, then we are helping people by decreasing their risk of missing time from playing the sport they love. The most common exercise-based strategies at the elite level include eccentric exercise,

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We will outline all of these and much more but first, *we need to educate you on the most common soccer injuries.*

What Are The Most Common Soccer Muscle Injuries?

Muscle and tendon injuries are much more common in soccer compared to bone contusions and fractures or joint and ligament injuries (4). Because of this, there has been plenty of research conducted as well as a lot of emphasis put on what are the best soccer prehab exercises for ‘injury prevention when it comes to muscle injuries. **There is evidence to support specific exercises** being

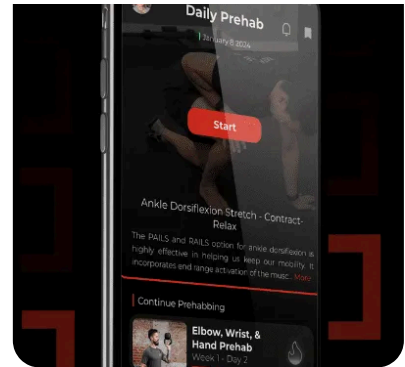
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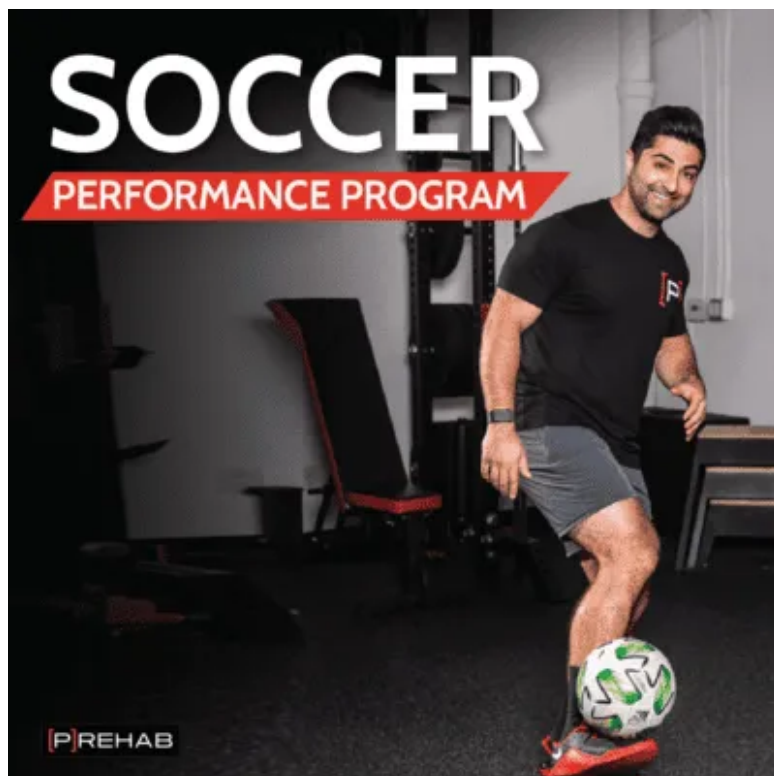
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the specific evidence below)!

However, as we will discuss later in the article, *injury prevention may not be the best word as it could be interpreted incorrectly* whereas **risk reduction or risk mitigation** would be more accurate.



Looking To Become A More Fit,
Efficient Soccer Player?



physical requirements and demands a lot from your body. Prepare for the sport you love and protect your body from the most common soccer injuries with our **Soccer [P]rehab Program!** You will train hard and expose your body to soccer-specific injury prevention (what we like to call risk-reduction) exercises so that you'll be as ready as you can be to play! This program is rooted in scientific evidence, our clinical expertise as physical therapists, and of course our experience as soccer players!

Hamstring Strains

Hamstring strains are the most common soccer muscle injury accounting for up to 50% of muscle

injured is in **high speed running activities** during terminal swing phase and **during a kicking motion** when there is simultaneous hip flexion and knee extension. About a third of athletes who suffer a hamstring strain will experience a re-injury within a year of returning to their sport. The greatest risk of re-injury is in the **first two weeks following return to play**, and *the second injury is usually more severe than the initial strain.* **Factors contributing** to the high rate of recurring hamstring strain injuries include...

1. Persistent weakness
2. Reduced extensibility of the musculotendinous unit
3. Compensatory movement patterns and biomechanics

The key to effective prevention of any injury is understanding its modifiable risk factors. For a hamstring strain, a case can be made for hamstring weakness, impaired flexibility of hamstrings and quads, strength and coordination deficits of pelvic and trunk muscles, and impaired lumbopelvic rhythm all playing a role in hamstring strain injury risk. However, the modifiable risk factor most supported by research is eccentric hamstring strength. When a player shoots the ball and is going into hip flexion and knee extension, the hamstrings must have enough eccentric strength to be able to control the rate of knee extension being produced concentrically by the quads. If the quads have significantly more

control, leading to over-stretching of the hamstrings and subsequent injury. **Soccer prehab exercises for hamstrings should include eccentric hamstring muscle action as well as core stability (5-8).**

Nordic Hamstring Curl

Sample [P]rehab Soccer Program Exercise

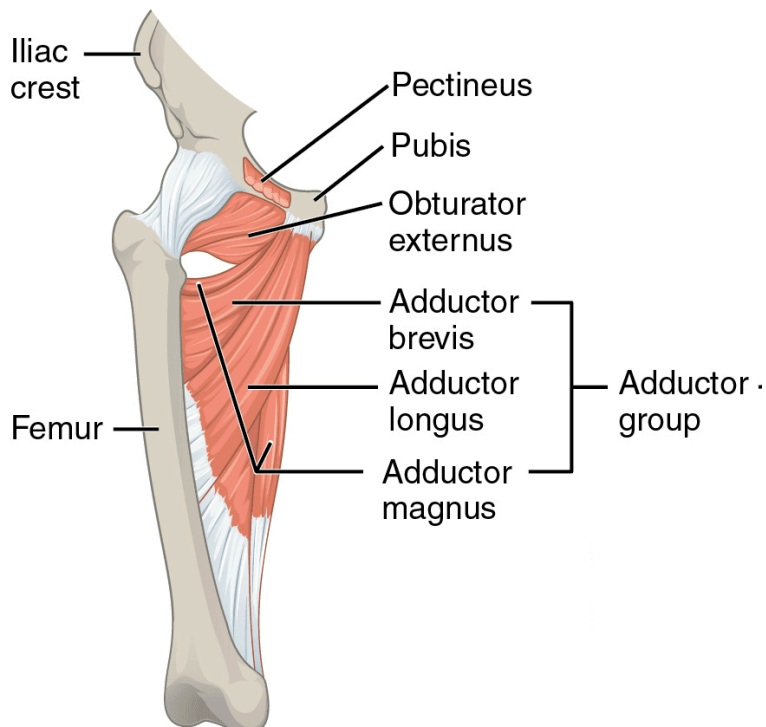
The gold standard for the hamstrings is the *Nordic Hamstring Exercise*. Incorporating hamstring eccentric strengthening exercises has been found to be successful in helping to reduce the incidence of hamstring strain injuries up to 51% in soccer players (8). Eccentric exercises increase muscle fascicle length and improve

comprehensive hamstring strain injury prevention program should include eccentric hamstring strengthening exercises, quad and hamstring flexibility, neuromuscular control of the lower extremities and lumbopelvic region, core stability, and sport-specific movement patterns. If these two variations are too hard for you, check out the read below to learn more about *Nordic Hamstring Curl Variations*.

READ: NORDIC HAMSTRING CURL VARIATIONS



Adductor Strains



The adductor muscle group is made up of the adductor magnus, longus, and brevis. There are other

demands in sports training and competition such as soccer, **there is a high prevalence of adductor muscle injuries**. From research, we understand contributing risk factors to adductor muscle strains include a muscle strength ratio imbalance between the hip adductors and hip abductors as well as lower adductor strength was found during the preseason when comparing players who sustained groin strains compared with injured players. However, *there is evidence to suggest including eccentric adductor strengthening exercises can potentially reduce injuries in athletes, specifically soccer players (9)!*

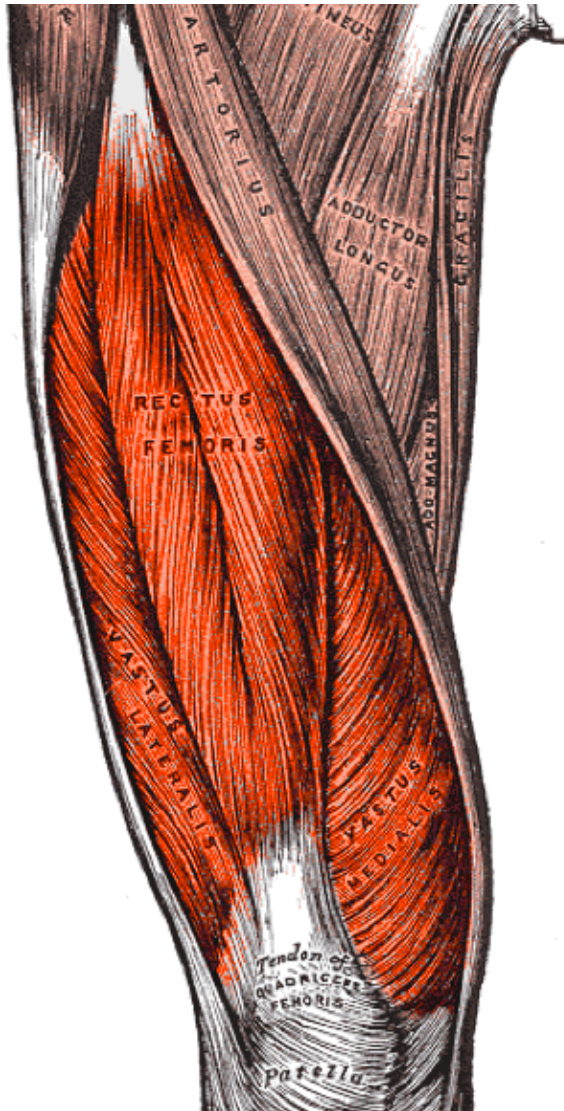
Soccer Prehab Exercises For The Adductors

Sample [P]rehab Soccer Program Exercise

The **gold standard for the adductors** is the *Copenhagen Adductor* as it demands high muscle activity of the adductor longus muscle and the abdominal muscles, both of which are protective against groin problems (9). However, this exercise is not easy for the first-timer! Below are some of our favorite alternatives

here.

Quad Strains



The quadriceps muscle group is made up of the vastus intermedius, vastus lateralis, vastus medialis, and rectus femoris. Quad strains are another common soccer muscle injury due to its biarticular nature (the rectus femoris muscle crossing

direction, and kicking motions.

Injury risk factors contributing to quad strains include...

1. poor flexibility of the muscle
2. poor eccentric strength
3. previous quadriceps or hamstring injury

Again, **the benefit of eccentric exercises** is that they help with improving muscle architecture features, which include pennation angle, muscle thickness, and fascicle length. Improving these features can have **a positive impact on muscle function as well as muscle injury risk**. It is also worth noting eccentric exercises can increase muscle force and power values to a greater extent than concentric or isometric exercise! Improving eccentric quad

Soccer Rehab Exercises For The Quadriceps

Sample Soccer [P]rehab Program Exercise Video

The **gold standard** for the **quadriceps** is the *Reverse Nordic Hamstring Curl* demonstrated above as it has been shown to

to manage a hip flexor strain.

Keys To Preventing Soccer Injuries

This is a great introduction to the most common soccer prehab exercises for muscle injuries. Craig not only takes Mike through different levels of adductor, quadriceps, and hamstring exercises, but he also reviews how to perform these exercises by yourself or with a partner!



Lateral ankle sprains are one of the most commonly diagnosed injuries in soccer, accounting for anywhere from 15 to 20 percent of all injuries. Lateral ankle sprains occur when the ankle is plantarflexed and inverted and can happen when a player is cutting, changing speed or direction, or landing from a jump. Soccer players typically have tight calves, which may predispose them to lateral ankle sprains due to the relative position of plantar flexion caused by calf tightness. Soccer players may also be **susceptible to**

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An ankle sprain with no loss of function and no ligamentous laxity is classified as a grade 1 injury, and the athlete will typically return to sport in 5-9 days. In a grade 2 injury, there is some loss of function with anterior talofibular ligament (ATFL) involvement. With a grade 3 injury, there is almost complete loss of function of the ATFL and

address the athlete's specific impairments that led to his or her initial injury that may be putting them at an increased risk of reinjury.

Research shows that there can be balance impairments and compensatory movement patterns in both the involved and uninvolved ankle for up to 6 months post-injury. In fact, up to 34% of athletes who sprain their ankle will experience continued pain, swelling, re-injury, instability, or limitations in physical activity (12-15).

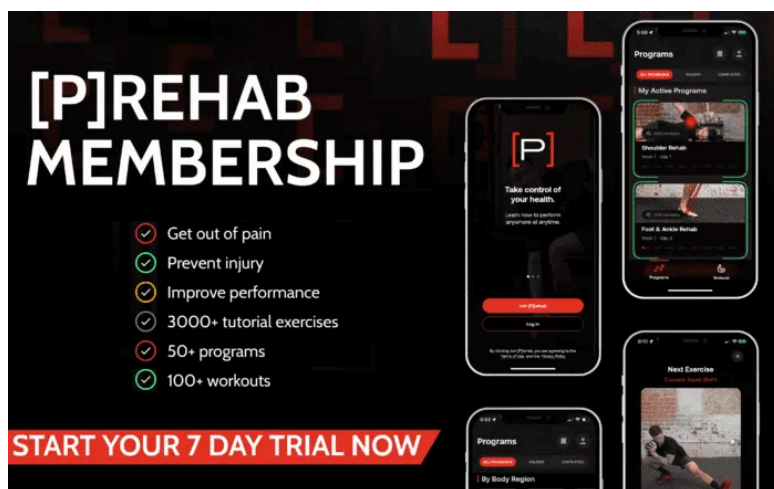
**Single-Leg Stability – Volleys,
Skater Hops Passing, SL RDL to
Volley, SL Passing**

Video by contributing author **Nicole Surdyka**

Studies have shown **a decrease in the recurrence of ankle sprains when a proprioceptive training program has been implemented.**

Exercises such as the Star Excursion Balance Test can be initiated immediately following an injury on the uninvolved side since studies have shown that usually, both ankles have balance and movement impairments in athletes who suffer a lateral ankle sprain. Once the athlete is full weight-bearing, they can begin the balance training on the injured side. It is also advised to **address the underlying strength, mobility,**

strengthening the calves, as well as training single-leg stability should all be utilized as a part of a comprehensive prevention program. Some recommended soccer prehab exercises are inch worms, calf eccentrics, star excursion, and single-leg stability activities. Click [here](#) to learn more about how to [prehab and manage ankle sprains](#).



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ACL Injuries

ACL Injuries are one of the most well-known and feared injuries a soccer player can sustain. Over 200,000 ACL injuries occur each year and are more common in female soccer players. Some studies suggest that up to 80% of ACL injuries are non-contact in

bodyweight shifted over the injured side, and a high knee internal extension torque coupled with dynamic valgus forces. **Some typical playing situations that lead to noncontact ACL injuries** are a change of direction or cutting combined with deceleration, landing from a jump in or near full extension, and pivoting on a planted foot with the knee near full extension. The forces on the ACL are the highest when the knee is flexed to about 20-30 degrees. Studies have shown that female soccer players demonstrate decreased knee flexion during landing, cutting, and deceleration tasks, typically staying between 0-30 degrees of knee flexion (16-24). You can [learn more about the ACL](#)

Soccer Prehab Specific Plyometrics

Studies have shown that approximately 1 in 3 athletes who return to their sport after sustaining an ACL injury **will either injure the same ACL again or injure the contralateral side**. It is easy to see why preventing an ACL injury in the first place is a high priority. The intrinsic *modifiable risk factors associated with an ACL tear* are BMI, neuromuscular and biomechanical deficits, hormonal status, and fatigue. **There are several ACL injury**

plyometrics, lower extremity strengthening, core control, and dynamic balance with an emphasis on correct mechanics. The best results have been demonstrated when the **prevention program is implemented during pre-season and maintained throughout the season.** Soccer-specific activities that utilize a soccer ball might help encourage implementation and promote compliance, especially among youth soccer teams (25-27).

Soccer Prehab Exercise Specific To Core Stability

Trunk position can largely influence knee position, which you know by now matters with ACL injuries. Don't forget to include core stability soccer prehab exercises, you can make them fun with soccer included!

Closing Thoughts

No, unfortunately, we cannot prevent all soccer injuries from occurring. That is the nature of sports, there is an inherent risk of getting injured. However, that doesn't mean we throw away soccer prehab exercises! The goal of [P]Rehab is to mitigate the level of

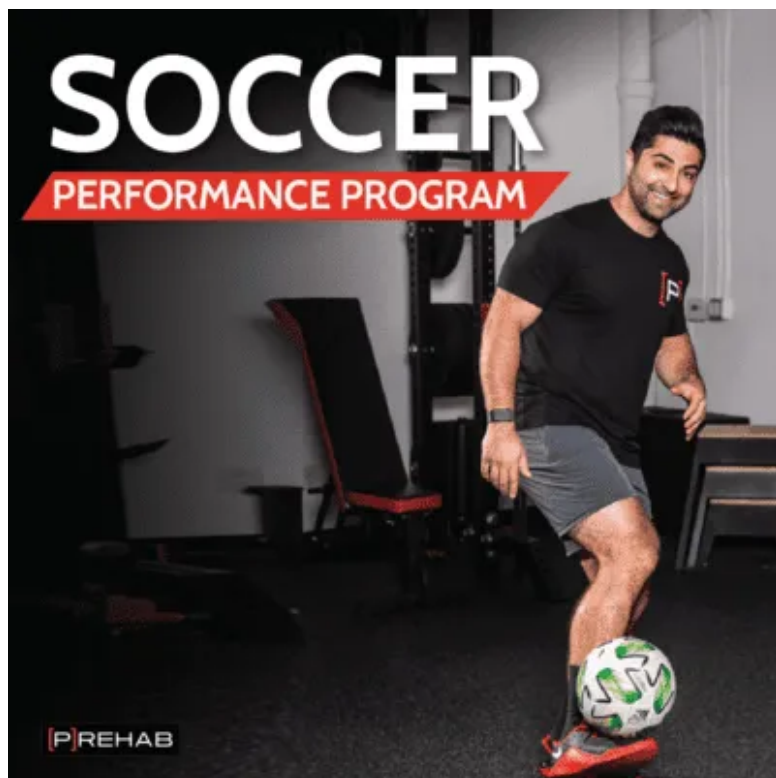
being a pro soccer player is a full-time job year-round. Players have to take care of their bodies, they train in order to expose their bodies to the demands of their sport in an effort to be prepared to perform at the highest level with the lowest risk of injury!

But, some scientific research suggests otherwise. Recent evidence suggests there is no high-level scientific evidence to support the effectiveness of exercise strategies to prevent muscle injuries in elite footballers (4). However, the systematic review (a type of literature review that critically appraises other research studies) heavily weighted the risk of bias. What the study deemed to increase the risk of bias included blinding, exposure to training and

players in the top 3 divisions, whereas there is plenty of evidence in other soccer demographics to support soccer injury prevention exercises. We also have to take into consideration what affected the risk of bias in regards to the studies they appraised.

At the elite level, no professional organization is going to blind their fitness coaches and physiotherapists to the research being conducted on their squad. Also, teams are less inclined to report the details of their proprietary training methods or their player's training loads as this could risk the competitive edge one club has on another. In our opinion and likely the opinion of many others, soccer prehab

Looking For The Ultimate Guide For Soccer Prehab Exercises?



The thought of creating and designing a 3-month program can sound overwhelming for soccer athletes. **That isn't your expertise, you just want to play!** However, in order to play and practice, your body needs to be able to handle the demands of the sport. Let us help you play the sport you love

and have designed programming based on our experiences playing the sport growing up and working alongside D1 soccer programs. We have already taken into account the needs analysis for soccer and have put together **the best programming specific to soccer players!**

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Team [P]rehab April 4, 2022 at 8:46 am [Log in to Reply](#)

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