



**What is an effective  
warm-up and  
cool-down? ▶**

◀ **W**hen it comes to injury prevention, warming up and cooling down are an important part of playing the game. A coach should never simply tell a child to do the warm-up at the start of a practice. Children often don't know how to warm up properly. They need to do their warm-up exercises as a group and be given direction on what exercises to perform.

Every exercise session should begin with an activity that warms and loosens the muscles and connective tissues and raises the heart rate. A game of tag is not only fun, but also helps to warm the body and get the blood flowing. The body needs about five minutes of movement with about five to 10 minutes of stretching.

Following the warm-up, the coach should instruct the children in slow or static stretching. Holding stretches for 10 to 15 seconds allows the muscles to stretch to their greatest length. Bouncing during a stretch should be avoided.

A total body stretch starts from the head and moves down the body including the neck and chest, shoulders, the back, the groin, hamstrings or back of the thigh, quadriceps or front of the thigh, and the heel cords.

Practices should end with a proper cool-down to bring the heart rate back to normal and the body back to its normal temperature. Cool-down also prevents stiffness and sore muscles.

Youngsters should never just stop moving after a strenuous game or practice. A cool-down involves gradually slowing down the sport or activity, cooling down the body for approximately 10 minutes. This should be followed by more stretching. After exercise, the body is more flexible.

## How to dress for safety.

When a child is active in sport, dressing safely is an important part of injury prevention. Here is some commonsense advice on how to dress for safety.

- Anything that dangles is dangerous. Ties should be removed from coats or jackets. Neckwarmers are safer than scarves.
- Wearing jewelry on the playing field is inappropriate. Remove rings, necklaces, and earrings.
- On hot summer days, cool, light-coloured clothing is recommended. Hats and sunscreen are a must. In winter, dressing in layers is best. If the child gets too hot, one layer can be peeled off.
- For indoor sports, footwear should be appropriate for the sport. High-cut running shoes are best for sports where there is a lot of twisting and turning.