

Hockey Tips: Dynamic Warm-up and Flexibility Training

If you have been to sport science presentation lately it is likely that you have heard some information about dynamic warm-up and flexibility training. This is an area of training that is receiving more and more attention in the sporting community and many of the conclusions that have been drawn about this type of warm-up are directly applicable to hockey.

Pre-practice and pre-competition warm-up routines have typically focused on static stretching. While this type of stretching is still important for maintaining flexibility and joint range of motion, it really should be performed after play, not before practice or competition. This is a new way of thinking about stretching and flexibility, but recent research has shown that static stretching can reduce the force and power the muscle can generate and that this impaired function can last for over one hour. Therefore, the traditional practice of team static stretching in a circle on the ice needs to change

One of the most pervasive myths in sports is the belief that stretching before activity improves performance and reduces the risk of injury. Over a decade of biomechanical research on the acute and long-term responses of muscle to stretching shows that this traditional teaching is wrong. Stretching is most effective for increasing range of motion when conducted during the cool-down phase of a workout.

Dynamic warm-up and flexibility training is an essential element of any pre-practice or pre-competition routine and helps prepare the body for the demands of today's hockey game. An effective warm-up does five very important things for hockey players.

- 1. Increases body temperature allowing muscles to work more efficiently.**
- 2. Gets the heart and lungs ready for vigorous activity.**
- 3. Stretches muscles actively, preparing them for the dynamic forces experienced during hockey practices and games.**
- 4. Engrains proper movement patterns and the coordination needed in hockey.**
- 5. Wakes up the nervous system and gets the brain talking with the muscles.**
- 6. Prevents injury, while improving performance.**

A dynamic warm-up, which involves active stretching with movement, accomplishes all of these tasks. So get up, get moving, get ready and get in the game.