

Review Article
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Strategies for Preventing Sports Injuries: A Practical Review

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ABSTRACT

Sports injuries are common at every level of athletic participation. They limit performance, shorten careers, and can have long-term effects on joint health. Over the last two decades, a growing body of research has highlighted effective ways to reduce both the number and severity of these injuries.

Objective: This review aims to translate current scientific knowledge into clear, practical strategies that coaches, clinicians, and athletes can apply in everyday training.

Methods: A narrative review was conducted, drawing on key studies, systematic reviews, and established prevention programmes. The focus is on simple, evidence-based strategies such as structured warm-ups, neuromuscular and strength training, load management, nutrition, recovery, equipment use, and education.

Results: Evidence supports multi-component approaches. Structured warm-up programmes (e.g., FIFA 11+) lower overall injury risk. Neuromuscular training improves movement quality and reduces the likelihood of knee injuries, especially ACL tears. Strength and conditioning build resilience against overload. Balanced nutrition, hydration, and adequate recovery further protect athletes.

Conclusions: Preventing sports injuries is realistic if we combine training-based strategies with proper recovery and education. Success depends not only on the science but also on compliance.

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Introduction

Sport and physical activity provide major health and social benefits. However, injuries remain a significant barrier, particularly for competitive athletes. The classic framework for sports injury prevention involves four steps: (1) describing the injury problem, (2) identifying risk factors, (3) developing preventive interventions, and (4) evaluating outcomes. This paper summarizes the current evidence into practical strategies suitable for clinicians and coaches.

Methods

This review synthesizes peer-reviewed studies, systematic reviews, and practical programmes with proven application in sports settings. The priority is to highlight interventions that are both evidence-based and feasible in everyday training environments.

Results

Structured Warm-up Programmes

Warm-ups that include dynamic stretching, agility, and core stability significantly reduce injury incidence. The FIFA 11+ programme is the most established, lowering both acute and overuse injuries.

Neuromuscular Training

Neuromuscular training enhances landing control, balance, and

coordination. It reduces ACL injury risk, particularly in young female athletes.

Strength and Conditioning

Resistance training increases muscular support for joints, reducing the likelihood of strains. Eccentric hamstring work and multi-joint exercises are effective.

Load Management

Sudden spikes in training load are linked to overuse injuries. Periodisation and gradual progressions prevent overload.

Nutrition, Hydration and Recovery

Adequate calories, protein, hydration, and sleep are essential for tissue repair and resilience.

Equipment and Playing Surfaces

Proper footwear, protective gear, and safe playing surfaces reduce injury severity.

Education and Adherence

Programmes are only effective when athletes and coaches comply. Education and simple monitoring improve adherence.

Discussion

Multi-faceted programmes that integrate warm-up, neuromuscular, and strength training have the strongest evidence base. While FIFA 11+ is sport-specific to football, the same principles can be adapted to other sports. Compliance remains the greatest challenge—time-efficient routines and coach engagement are essential [1-8].

Practical Recommendations

- Implement structured warm-ups before every session.
- Include neuromuscular training two to three times weekly.
- Use progressive strength programmes with eccentric focus.
- Monitor training loads and apply gradual progressions.
- Prioritize nutrition, hydration, and adequate sleep.
- Ensure equipment and surfaces are safe and appropriate.
- Educate athletes and track adherence.

Conclusion

Sports injuries can be significantly reduced with consistent use of structured warm-ups, neuromuscular training, strength work, and proper recovery strategies. Prevention requires collaboration between athletes, coaches, and clinicians to ensure long-term adoption.

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