

Preventing ACL Injuries in Young Women



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Tips you can use on and off the field.

Young female athletes are getting more anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries. In the last decade alone, ACL tears are up 12%, and women are four to six times more likely to get an ACL injury than men. Luckily, there are ways to reduce risk.

Why are ACL injuries more common in women?

- **Hormones and flexibility** — Hormones in women, like estrogen, increase the flexibility in ligaments.
- **Knee alignment** — Women's knees often have an inward tilt, which increases stress on the ACL.
- **Muscle imbalances** — Women rely more on their quadriceps, which can add more pressure to the knees.
- **Narrower ACL tunnel** — The ACL tunnel, or intercondylar notch, is narrower in women lowering stress tolerance.

Can ACL injuries be prevented?

Parents, coaches and players all have the power to reduce the risk of an ACL injury.

- **Hydration and balanced diet** — Hydration keeps the players limber and a balanced diet helps athletes build strength.
- **Loop band exercises** — These low-impact exercises can be finely tuned to strengthen muscles around the knee and increase flexibility.
- **Playing different sports** — Athletes who play a variety of sports at an early age lower their overall risk of many sports-related injuries.
- **Warmups and cooldowns** — Athletes of all ages should warm up and cool down before and after practice and games.



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ACL Tear Recovery Timeline

An ACL tear isn't something that heals overnight. It takes time, strength and a care team you can count on. If you have an ACL tear, this is the timeline to expect:

- **Nine to 12 months** — With an ACL tear, it'll take nearly a year before you're back on the field. And you most likely won't be back to full performance when you return.
- **12 to 18 months** — After being cleared to play, you'll need to focus on regaining strength, balance and confidence. It'll take time to return to your former level before the injury.
- **18 months and beyond** — It's more than possible to return to your previous performance level. In fact, even with an ACL injury, you can go beyond your previous level to new heights.

Did you know?

Most professional women's soccer teams have at least one player who had a serious ACL injury and returned to a high level of play.

Pediatric Orthopedic Care

Sutter has a whole pediatrics team on your team. From diagnosis to recovery, we support children, teens and your family.

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