

## ECHO



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### Warming up lowers pivotal injuries in youth sports

**A** structured warm up programme should be part of all youth sports to save serious knee and ankle injuries, say researchers in sports trauma, based on a cluster randomised control trial.

This is the first time a large enough trial has been carried out to show this definitely. The researchers are confident that their findings in handball players will apply to other sports with similar moves and similar patterns and mechanisms of injury and that players of all levels would benefit.

The risks of injuries to legs and of acute knee and ankle injuries were drastically reduced—by half or more—in handball clubs randomised to receive the programme than the control clubs whose members followed their usual training regime. The rate ratio of acute injuries overall and knee or ankle injuries also dropped significantly in matches.

The trial included 1837 players aged 15–17 years in federation handball clubs in central and eastern Norway, randomly assigned to the programme or to act as controls. The two groups were matched by region, playing level, sex, and number of players. The Oslo Sports Trauma Research Centre and Norway's Handball Federation devised the programme to foster awareness and control in movements of the knee and ankles. It was used the first 15 consecutive training sessions, then once a week throughout the league (eight months).

Sports injuries count for up to a fifth of acute emergency injuries in Scandinavia. Most are knee and ankle injuries, the most serious being commonest among adolescents in sports that entail pivoting movements.

▲ Olsen O-E, *et al.* *BMJ* 2005;**330**:449–452.