

GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SPORTS

Reducing the Risk of ACL Injuries



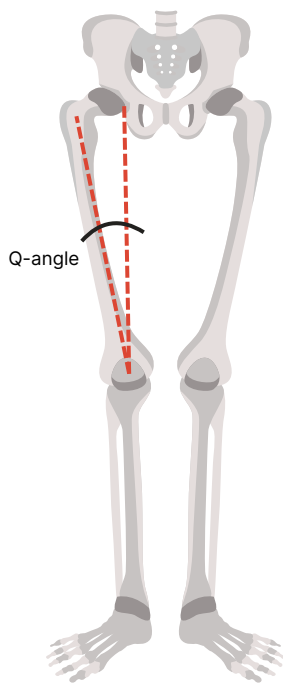
Empowering female athletes to
stay strong and injury-free

by John DeLucchi, PT, DPT



Understanding ACL Injuries in Female Athletes

ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) injuries are a significant concern for female athletes. Women are **2-8 times more likely** than men to experience an ACL injury due to several key factors:



Anatomy

Women tend to have a wider Q-angle (the angle between the hip and knee), which places additional stress on the knee joint.

Movement Patterns

Many female athletes demonstrate biomechanics like knee valgus (knee caving inward during landing or cutting), which increases injury risk.

Hormonal Influence

Fluctuations in estrogen can affect ligament strength and joint stability, making the ACL more vulnerable at certain points in the menstrual cycle.

While these factors may increase risk, ACL injuries are not inevitable. Female athletes can take proactive steps to protect themselves and continue thriving in sports.

KEY FACT

Women are at a greater risk of non-contact ACL injuries, often occurring during activities like jumping, cutting, or sudden directional changes.



Prevention Strategies for Female Athletes

Preventing ACL injuries starts with preparation and awareness. Integrating evidence-based prevention strategies into training programs can significantly reduce risk.

1 Dynamic Warm-Ups

A proper warm-up activates the muscles and prepares the body for high-intensity activity.

Include:

- High knees
- Lateral lunges
- Single-leg hops

3 Neuromuscular Training

Practicing controlled movements improves landing mechanics and agility.

Key drills:

- Jumping and landing softly with knees aligned over toes
- Change-of-direction drills with focus on control

2 Strength Training

Building Strong Hamstrings, quadriceps, glutes, and core muscles reduces strain on the ACL.

Exercises to try:

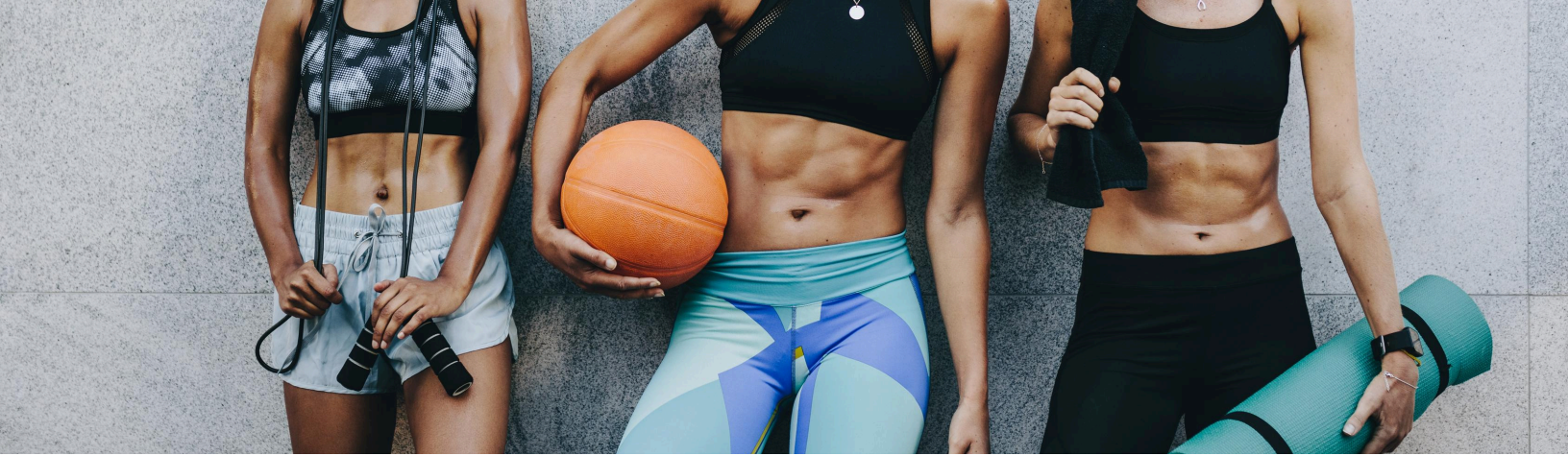
- Romanian deadlifts
- Single-leg squats
- Glute bridges

4 Balance & Core Work

Improving balance and core strength enhances overall stability during quick movements

ACTIONABLE TIP:

Incorporate structured programs like FIFA 11+, which are proven to reduce injury rates, but adapt them for the specific needs of female athletes.



The Role of Strength Training and Monitoring Progress

Strength training is a cornerstone of ACL injury prevention, especially for female athletes who may have imbalances between their quadriceps and hamstrings.

Dynamic Warm-Ups

- Increase hamstring strength to balance the quadriceps, reducing stress on the knee.
- Develop glute strength to improve hip stability and reduce knee valgus.

Monitoring Your Progress

- Use movement assessments, like observing landing mechanics, to track improvements.
- Gradually increase training intensity and resistance to build strength over time.

DAY	ACTIVITY	FOCUS
Monday	Strength Training	Glutes, hamstrings, and quads
Tuesday	Dynamic warm-up & drills	Jumping mechanics and agility
Wednesday	Rest or light recovery	Yoga or walking
Thursday	Strength training	Lower body focus with core integration
Friday	Neuromuscular training	Change-of-direction and balance drills
Saturday	Sport-specific practice	Incorporate learned techniques
Sunday	Rest or recovery	Foam rolling, stretching, hydration



What to do after an ACL Injury

Even with prevention efforts, injuries can happen. If you or a teammate experiences an ACL injury, recovery and rehabilitation are key to returning stronger.

1 Rehabilitation Goals

Regain Strength and Mobility: Focus on restoring quadriceps and hamstring strength symmetry.

2 Neuromuscular Retraining

Relearn proper movement patterns to prevent re-injury.

3 Sport-Specific Drills

Gradually reintegrate into sport-specific activities.

Returning to Sport:

- Programs like ACL-SPORTS bridge the gap between physical therapy and competitive sports.
- Regular assessments ensure readiness to return safely.
- Psychological readiness is just as important as physical readiness.

KEY FACT

Athletes who complete a comprehensive return-to-sport program are significantly less likely to suffer a second ACL injury.

Empowerment Through Preparation

Reducing ACL injuries isn't just about preventing setbacks—it's about building confidence and unlocking potential. Female athletes can thrive when armed with the right knowledge, tools, and support.



1

Commit to a prevention program

Tailored to your sport and body.



2

Focus on strength training

Neuromuscular drills and proper movement mechanics.



3

Seek guidance

From coaches, trainers, and physical therapists to refine your techniques.



4

Stay consistent

Prevention is a long-term commitment!

By taking these steps, you'll not only protect yourself from injury, but also enhance your performance and stay in the game you love.

CLOSING INSPO

“Strong knees, strong mind, strong game.”



TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Prioritize your health and protect your future as an athlete. Contact Capital Ortho for personalized ACL prevention and recovery programs. Together, we'll help you build strength, confidence, and resilience.

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