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ORTHOPEDIC & SPORTS PHYSICAL THERAPY



5 Exercises to Help Prevent ACL Injuries

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Looking forward to hitting the slopes this ski season? If so, making sure your muscles are in great shape can be critical to avoiding serious injuries such as Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) tears.

We recommend training your muscles for at least 6 weeks prior to your ski trip by including a series of exercises three times a week. Not only can these exercises help to improve your strength, coordination, and flexibility, but they may even help correct movement patterns that may be damaging your joints. These incorrect patterns of movement may put you at a greater risk for injuring your Anterior Cruciate Ligaments (ACL).



Exercise #1: Heel Touches

Stand on one foot on a solid and sturdy step or box with the other foot off the edge. Using your arms to steady yourself, bend your stance leg and lower your body down until the heel on your hanging leg touches the ground, then push back up. Keep your hips level and your knee and foot aligned while you do the exercise. DO NOT allow your knee to come forward over your toes or sway toward your other knee. Do 1-2 sets of 10 repetitions on each leg. Make sure to stop if you

feel pain in either knee.



Exercise #2: Wall Squats

Lean up against a wall, preferable with a stability ball in between you and the wall. Bend your knees and slide down the wall until your knees are directly over your ankles but not ahead of your toes. Hold this position for 20 seconds and push back to standing position. Do 1 set of 15 repetitions. If you feel pain, try decreasing the depth of the squat or discontinue the exercise.



Exercise #3: Straight Leg Raises

Sit or lay on a solid surface. Put one leg straight in front of you and the other leg bent. Tight the muscles on the front of your thigh on your straight leg and lift your leg 6-12 inches from the surface, keeping your knee locked, then hold 5 seconds and then slowly lower without allowing your heel to touch the floor. Do 2-3 sets of 15 repetitions on each leg.



Exercise #4: Single Leg Balance

Stand on one leg with your knee slightly bent and attempt to maintain your balance for 30-60 seconds. Keep your hip, knee, and foot aligned with your hip over your knee and foot. Do 3 sets on each foot. If this exercise becomes too easy, increase the time you stand on each foot or by standing on a soft surface, such as a foam pad.



Exercise #5: Mini Squats on Unstable Surface

Steady yourself on an unsteady surface, such as an Airex pad or 2 Dynadisc. While engaging your core muscles, slowly lower your body into a mini (PAIN FREE) squat, making sure to not allow your knees to come forward in front of your toes. It is best to do this exercise in front of a mirror

to be sure that your knees are remaining shoulder width apart (NOT falling toward each other). Be sure to stop if you have pain.

PEARLS OF WISDOM:

If you have a sedentary job, or it has been a while since you've been skiing, PLEASE take a lesson from a professional ski instructor to get a refresher on tips to ski with good form and to remain in control! Also, remember to stop once your muscles are fatigued. This is when most injuries occur!