

Athletes warming up wrong: study

December 19 2011

(Medical Xpress) -- Static stretching warm ups are being overused by athletes even though they can be counter-productive, according to Victoria University research.

James Zois from Victoria University's School of Sport & Exercise Science said too many athletes were using static stretching such as calf, quad and hip flex stretches just before competing even though it has been shown to reduce power.

"It's an epidemic: I see it at almost every AFL club, tennis match or international soccer event where athletes are stretching on the sidelines just prior to playing," he said. "People just aren't getting the message."

Mr. Zois' research showed static stretching decreased jumping performance by almost 8 per cent, while a more dynamic warm-up increased participants' vertical jump by 3 per cent.

Dynamic warm-ups included range of motion activities like high-knee raises, leg swings and run-throughs or change of direction tasks.

Mr. Zois said the study proved that, from a power point of view, static stretching was worse than no warm up at all.

"It's called a warm-up because its aim is to increase the metabolic processes, heart rate, muscle temperature and oxygen delivery to working muscles," he said. "If you do anything passive, like static stretching, you actually reverse those processes and so are actually doing

the opposite of a warm up.”

With an almost 11 per cent difference between static and dynamic stretching, Mr. Zois said athletes could not afford to ignore the facts.

“Too many [athletes](#) still use the counterproductive technique of static stretching during the warm-up”, he said.

He said there was definitely a place for static stretching, particularly for those with chronic injuries or muscle stiffness concerns, but that it should not be a part of a normal athlete’s warm-up regime inside an hour of performance.

Mr. Zois has been working with the Collingwood Football Club to improve warm-up techniques and is currently Tennis Victoria’s strength and conditioning performance manager.

Provided by Victoria University

Citation: Athletes warming up wrong: study (2011, December 19) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-12-athletes-wrong.html>

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