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Cricket Stretches and Flexibility Exercises

Cricket is played with a bat and ball between two teams, generally of eleven players each. An elliptical grass field serves as the playing area including a center strip known as a pitch. At either end of the pitch is a set of three parallel wooden stakes or stumps driven into the ground, with two small crosspieces or bails laid on top of them. This entire wooden structure is called a wicket.



A player from the fielding team known as the bowler bowls a hard, fist-sized leather ball containing a cork center, from one wicket towards the other. The ball usually bounces once before reaching the opposing team's player or batsman, who defends the wicket from the ball with a wooden cricket bat. If the batsman makes a successful hit, he may then run between the wickets, exchanging ends with the other batsman (known as the "non-striker"), who stands near the bowler's wicket, to score runs. Other team members stand in various positions around the field, acting as fielders. The teams scoring the most runs, wins the game. Cricket is played in accordance with 42 laws of cricket, developed by the Marylebone Cricket Club in cooperation with the main cricketing nations

The game of cricket is believed to have been played in organized form hundreds of years ago. The modern version of the game originated in England and remains popular in present and former members of the English Commonwealth. In South Asian countries

- including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka - cricket is the most popular sport. Cricket has achieved worldwide popularity and is followed closely by fans in England, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Bermuda, and throughout the West Indies. In all, over 100 cricket-playing nations are recognized by the International Cricket Council, making the sport one of the most popular in the world.

Anatomy Involved

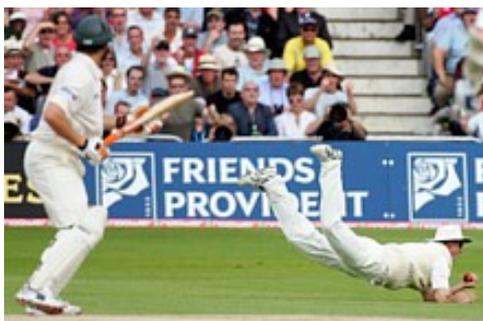
The sport of cricket relies on upper and lower body structures, depending on the specific activity. Stress to muscles in the head, neck and cervical spine are common. Upper limb structures (particularly used in batting) include the phalanges and metacarpal bones, as well as shoulder anatomy. As cricket is also a running sport, a strong contribution from the hamstring and quadriceps muscles is typical, as well as associated joints and structures in the ankle, knee and patella.

Cricket includes three primary activities: bowling, fielding and batting. The Bowling phase in cricket requires stressful use of back muscles, in particular, hyperextension, lateral flexion and thoraco-lumbar rotation. Additionally, muscles of the shoulder, especially the rotator cuff - a group of four, deep-lying, band muscles) - are heavily relied on.

Outfield players must accurately throw the ball at high speed toward the wicket, relying on the same muscle groups used by baseball pitchers. Distraction forces (those directed along the upper arm towards the elbow joint) play a major role. Additionally, biceps brachii muscles and the phalanges of the hand and associated muscles are used to propel and guide the ball.

As running plays a major role in cricket, associated anatomy is critical, particularly use of the hamstring muscles and quadriceps.

Most Common Cricket Injuries



The three elements that make up the game of cricket, (batting, bowling and fielding), each carry associated risk of injury. Injuries may be either of an acute or chronic nature, the latter resulting from overuse. The repetitive nature of the game combined with long periods of play on the field

produce a wide range of injuries, which may involve nearly any part of the body

Indirect injuries include muscle, ligament and tendon damage sustained during play. In the head and neck area, cricket players are vulnerable to muscle spasms and strains, particularly in the cervical spine. Such spasms and strains are likewise common in the trunk. Muscle strains, spasms and stress fractures can also occur in the lumbar spine, abdominal muscles, and ribs.

Upper limb injuries include fractures of the phalanges and metacarpal, joint injuries and shoulder injuries, (most commonly involving the rotator cuff). Lower limb injuries include muscle strains and tears (commonly in the quadriceps and hamstring), joint conditions as well as injuries to the knee, ankle and patella.

Acute injuries may include those caused by direct blows, which can occur when a player is struck by the ball, collides with another player, or runs into a hard impediment, such as the boundary fence. Wicket-keepers are vulnerable to trauma injuries, especially when receiving a fast delivery. Fielders are at risk both for direct trauma injuries from the ball and injury caused by sliding into the boundary fence.

The bowling phase in cricket produces large amounts of stress to the spine, leaving players vulnerable to degenerative ailments and bony abnormalities including spondylosis and spondylolisthesis., sclerosis of the pedicle, pars defect and disc degeneration. Stress fractures are common, particularly in the metatarsal bones, fibula and tibia. Painful splitting or wearing of the finger skin as bowlers repeatedly drag their skin across the seam of the ball to impart spin is a cricket-specific affliction.

Wicket-keepers in cricket are vulnerable to osteoarthritis of the knees as a result of repeated squatting, as well as in the joints of the hand, from repeatedly catching the ball. A variety of other injuries related to running, throwing or catching are also seen and include:

Impingement syndrome, degenerative rotator cuff injuries, tendonitis of the biceps, or tearing of the supraspinatus tendon. Frequent running predisposes cricket players to stress fractures, shin splints, patellar tendonitis and tearing of running related leg muscles.

Injury Prevention Strategies

Proper warm up prior to play and comprehensive conditioning and technique training are all essential in cricket, and may help to avoid some of the more common injuries, particularly those due to overuse, as well as strains and tears of muscle or tendon.

Additionally, the following steps should be taken to protect athletes from common cricket injuries:

- A front-on or side-on approach to the wicket lowers the degree of rotational stress in the lower back and may help avoid conditions like spondylolysis and facet joint arthrosis.
- Attention to field conditions is critical. Wet, uneven or obstructed playing surfaces pose considerable risk of injury.
- As summer athletes, cricket player are at risk for heat related injuries including dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and skin cancer. Players should maintain proper hydration and use sunscreen to protect the skin from damaging ultraviolet rays.
- In-fielders and batsmen should always wear properly-fitting helmets (including visor). Such protection is critical to prevent injuries to the eyes or face.
- Proper footwear helps protect the feet from injury, should they be struck by the ball.

The Top 3 Cricket Stretches

Below are 3 of the most beneficial stretches for cricket. Obviously there are a lot more, but these are a great place to start. Please make special note of the instructions beside each stretch.



**Standing High-leg
Bent Knee Hamstring
Stretch:** Stand with
one foot raised onto a
table. Keep your leg
bent and lean your
chest into your bent
knee.



**Lying Knee Roll-over
Stretch:** While lying on
your back, bend your
knees and let them
fall to one side. Keep
your arms out to the
side and let your back
and hips rotate with
your knees.



**Elbow-out Rotator
Stretch:** Stand with
your hand behind the
middle of your back
and your elbow
pointing out. Reach
over with your other
hand and gently pull
your elbow forward.