

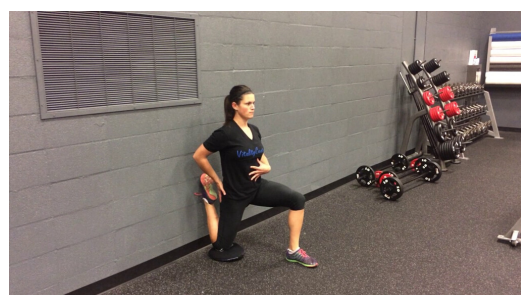


Recovery: it matters

Proper recovery is just as important to rugby as your training sessions. If you don't unwind physically and mentally, it gets much harder to keep backing up and playing your best week after week. Proper cooldowns and stretching help to prevent soft tissue injuries by keeping your joints healthy and mobile, so they can move through full range of motion. When your muscles and joints become too stiff your body can't function properly, which impacts your game and increases risk of injury.

Static stretches (build up to 60-second holds)

Here are some simple but useful stretches that target all the usual tight spots: glutes, hamstrings, quads, adductors, upper back and hip flexors. They take less than 10 minutes and can be done anytime. We recommend after training sessions and games, but they're also great before bed. The whole family can do them - so get everyone involved and start building them into your daily routine. Eventually they'll become habit and you'll start to move a lot more easily on the field.



Why breathing is important

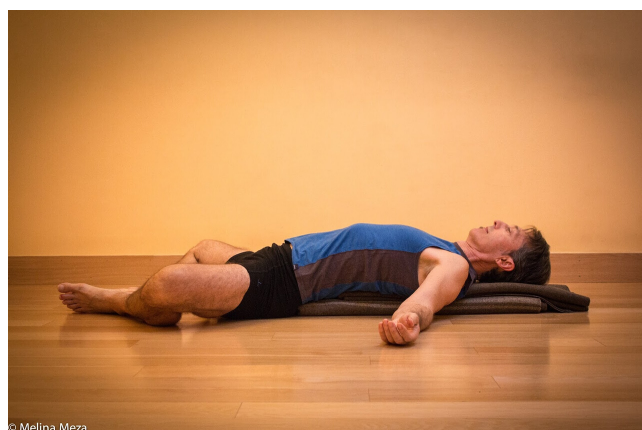
Proper breathing helps your game in lots of ways. In recovery, it helps switch us from the sympathetic nervous system (stress, tension, hard work, adrenaline - playing footy!) into the parasympathetic nervous system. This part of your nervous system is responsible for rest and digestion and kick-starts loads of important physiological functions to help your body heal. When you know how to breathe properly, you'll increase your lung capacity, so you can run faster and harder for longer. If you're not in control of your breath, you're not able to focus and make quick decisions on the field.

Diaphragmatic breathing

Most of us don't take proper inhales into our diaphragm, which is an important breathing muscle at the bottom of the ribs. This keeps us in the sympathetic "stress" nervous system. Diaphragmatic breathing switches you into parasympathetic "recover" mode and makes your lungs stronger.

Hold this stretch, which will open up your hips and free your chest to take some big breaths. If it's too intense, put cushions underneath your knees for support or just lengthen your legs.

Now, take long, slow and controlled inhales all the way down to your stomach. You can rest your hands on abdomen to feel the breath expand it. Hold the breath for a second, then breathe all the way out, feeling your abdomen contract. Do this for five minutes or so and notice how tension starts to leave your body.



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