

# WARM-UP FOR FEMALE RUGBY PLAYERS



## DID YOU KNOW?

Females are more often experiencing knee, ankle, and concussion injuries compared to males.

Research highlights that female athletes experience higher rates of knee injuries, particularly ACL injuries, which are often caused by non-contact movements like sudden deceleration, cutting, or pivoting. Ankle injuries are also more common in female players, with lateral ankle sprains being the most frequent. In terms of concussion, most cases in female rugby players result from head-to-ground impacts, such as hitting the head on the ground after being tackled.

## WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

A fun targeted warm-up designed specifically for females in rugby!

Targeted warm-up programmes have been shown to reduce injury risk by up to 50% when performed at least twice a week. These programs improve spatial awareness, promote safe movement patterns to protect joints, reduce vulnerable positions and in contact sports, help prepare the neck and body for contact and landing.



**WARM UP  
SMART.**

INVEST IN YOUR GAME.

# FIND OUT HOW A TARGETED WARM-UP CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE ...



## Improve Movement Control & Skill Development

Enhancing stability, mobility, and control is crucial for executing safe and effective movement patterns in rugby. Strengthening these foundations supports performance in key actions such as tackling, scrummaging, passing, sidestepping, and changing direction, while also reducing the risk of injury during play.



## Sharpen Physical & Mental Resilience

Developing resilience in muscles, tendons, and ligaments helps players handle the physical demands of rugby. This lowers the risk of common injuries, particularly to the knees and shoulders, and prepares the body for contact and collisions.

Mental resilience is just as important—warm-ups that foster focus, adaptability, and composure help players perform with confidence, consistency, and durability throughout the season.



## Boost Conditioning & Athletic Performance

Targeted warm-ups build athletic qualities essential for female rugby players, including:

- Strength – Enhancing muscular power for contact situations and tackles
- Power – Building explosiveness for lineouts, scrums, and dynamic movements
- Speed – Increasing sprint capacity for offensive breaks and defensive cover
- Agility – Improving quick changes of direction for evasive moves
- Landing control – Teaching safe mechanics for jumping, landing, and falling to reduce injury risk.

## Tips for an Engaging Warm-Up:

- *Make it fun: Use music to create a high-energy environment*
- *Rotate leadership: Let players take turns leading to build ownership*
- *Explain the ‘why’: Help wāhine understand the purpose behind each warm-up section to boost motivation.*

# KIA RITE WĀHINE MĀ:

**A RUGBY WARM-UP FOR INJURY  
PREVENTION & PERFORMANCE**



# TRY THIS TARGETED WARM-UP DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR FEMALE ATHLETES IN RUGBY ...

WARM-UP DURATION:

**15-20 MINUTES**

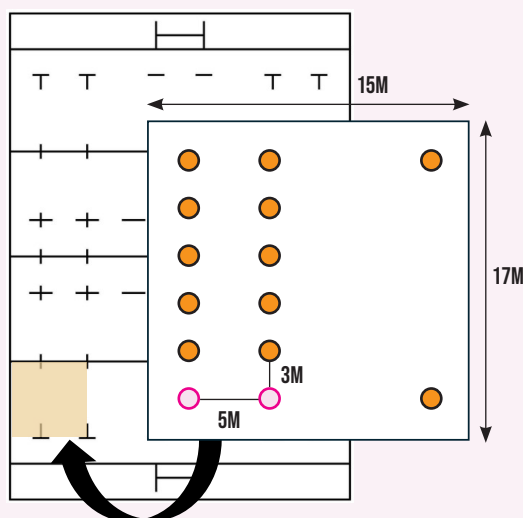
WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

**2** Rugby Balls   **14** Dome Cones   **2** \*Hit Shields   **1** Portable Speaker

*\*Only needed for contact version*

WARM-UP SET UP:

**SET UP THE CONES AS BELOW AND GET THE MUSIC PUMPING!**



**PREPARE STRONG.**

# PLAY STRONG.

**STAY STRONG.**

**1**

## Fire Up

2 MINS

**PURPOSE:** Elevate heart rate and increase circulation.

This activity takes place around the edge of the warm-up space, with players evenly spaced along the outside. Move continuously through different exercises guided by either the coach or a nominated player.

E.g., jogging forwards/backwards, side steps, high knees, heel flicks, bear crawl, straight-leg running, skipping, grapevine (carioca), run into the centre then out backwards, down-ups.

### 1. PERIMETER MOVEMENT DRILL



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE THIS DRILL**



## 2 Switch On

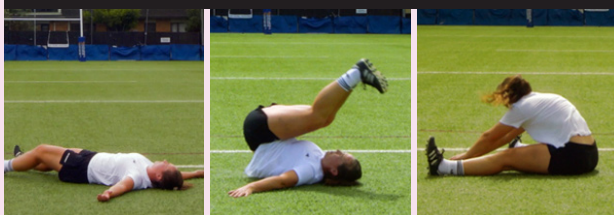
3 MINS

**PURPOSE:** Activate key muscle groups and improve range of motion.

Perform 10 repetitions of each movement before moving on.

\*10 reps per side for the leg swings.

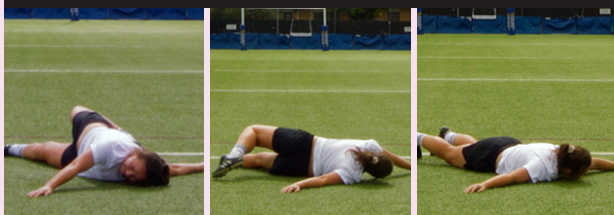
### 1. ROLL & REACH



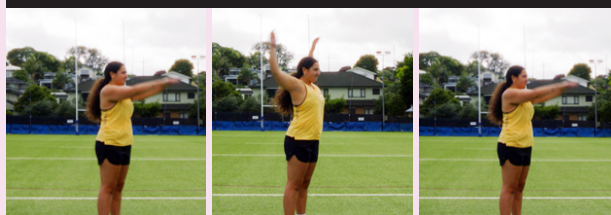
### 2. IRON CROSS



### 3. SCORPION



### 4. ARM CIRCLES



### 5. \*LEG SWINGS



### 6. OPEN GATE



### 7. CLOSE GATE



SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE  
THESE DRILLS IN MOTION



# 3 Strong & Steady

5 MINS

**PURPOSE:** Focus on strength, balance, coordination, and body awareness.

Complete each exercise over one length, then jog back to your line before starting the next. The final drill, Return to spot pogo' is done in pairs. One player hops on one leg for 15 seconds, then switches to the other leg. After that, the partner takes their turn.

## 1. WALKING LUNGES - (HALF LENGTH)



## 2. SQUATS - (HALF LENGTH)



## 3. SNAKE RUN



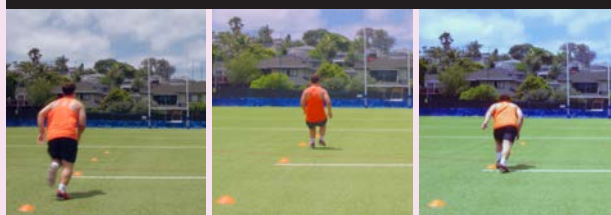
## 4. ZIG ZAG WITH PLANT AND HOLD



## 5. ZIG ZAG WITH CUT



## 6. TWO FORWARD, ONE BACK



## 7. RETURN TO SPOT POGO (PARTNER UP)



SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE  
THESE DRILLS IN MOTION



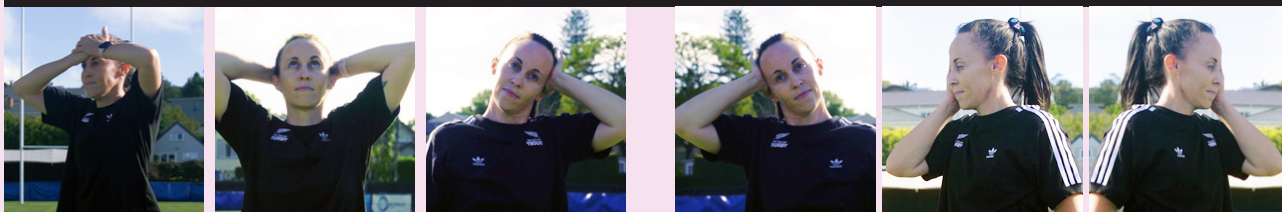
# 4 Game Ready

5 MINS

**PURPOSE:** Engage key muscles for contact rugby.

Include these exercises during contact rugby sessions or games. Perform each isometric neck hold for 15 seconds in all directions. Once completed, continue with the remaining drills, spending one minute on each exercise.

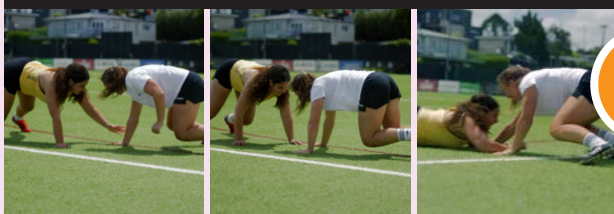
## 1. ISOMETRIC NECK HOLDS



## 2. TRIANGLE PULSES (GROUPS OF 3)



## 3A. PARTNER PUSH-UP BATTLE (PARTNER UP)



OR

## 3B. COACH QUEUED PUSH PULL (PARTNER UP)



## 4. PUMPELLING (PARTNER UP)



## 5. MULTISTAGE TACKLE DRILL



SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE  
THESE DRILLS IN MOTION



## Let's Finish with Intensity Sprints!

1 MIN

**Purpose:** *Lift the tempo to prime the body for performance.*

Complete the sprints starting from the pink cones (refer to the set-up diagram). Perform one effort at each intensity level while carrying a ball - 50%, 75%, and 100%, (jog back to the first cone in between efforts).



Check out NZR's "Points of Performance" resource to help ensure quality, safe movement during this warm-up.

### POINTS OF PERFORMANCE

SCAN HERE TO SEE THESE  
DRILLS IN MOTION



### ADDITIONAL STRENGTH AND BALANCE EXERCISES:

These exercises can be included during training or performed throughout the week outside of team sessions to build strength, balance, and stability. Neck strengthening and control exercises can also be incorporated into your warm-up or practiced separately outside of training. For more ideas, check out the neck exercises available on the World Rugby website.

- Copenhagen adductor exercise
- Nordic hamstring exercise
- Single-leg balance while passing a ball
- Press ups
- Planks
- Plyometrics

YOU ARE

READY  
TO PLAY!

### ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

SCAN HERE TO SEE THESE  
DRILLS IN MOTION



## FAQs

### Will these exercises give me muscle soreness?

Some soreness is normal 24–48 hours after strength exercises. If it persists or affects your training, seek advice from a physiotherapist or doctor.

### Who can use this warm-up programme?

This warm-up programme is designed for female rugby players aged 14 years and older. Similar injury prevention programmes in other sports (e.g. FIFA 11+) have been shown to be effective for athletes as young as seven, with minimal negative side effects.

### Can I include exercises specific to the upcoming training session?

While this warm-up prepares you for the key movements in rugby, you can build on it by adding position-specific exercises after completing the targeted warm-up.

### How long will it take for this warm-up to have an effect?

Improvement in movement quality and skill can occur in 3 to 4 weeks. For muscle strength, this may take up to 6 to 8 weeks. These timelines are an estimate, and are based on 2 to 3 sessions per week.

## DON'T SKIP THE COOL DOWN!

A proper cool-down helps your body recover and prepares you for the next session. Keep it simple:

- Light jogging or walking – gradually lower your heart rate.
- Static stretching – focus on key muscle groups like quads, hamstrings, and shoulders to maintain flexibility.

Recover smarter – cooling down can reduce soreness and help promote muscle recovery. Take the few extra minutes, it makes a difference!

PUT ON THOSE SLOW JAMS,  
AND COOL DOWN

LIKE A  
PRO!

## Supporting References

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ENSURE SAFE

QUALITY  
PLAY.