

ACL INJURY PREVENTION

Weekend Warrior 10-Minute Routine · No Equipment Needed

YOUR ROUTINE AT A GLANCE

WHO IT IS FOR	Skiers, hikers, pickleball players, and weekend soccer and basketball players: anyone active who doesn't train with a team
HOW LONG	10 minutes , no equipment
WHEN	Before every game, ski day, or hard workout. For the best protection, aim for at least 3 times a week
THE ONE RULE	Quality over quantity. Land softly and keep your knee lined up over your foot , never caving in

This routine is built on **neuromuscular training**, which teaches your body safer ways to land, stop, and change direction. Programs built on these principles reduce ACL injuries by **50% or more**. The goal is not to tire you out; it is to practice good movement until it becomes automatic.

In every exercise

- **Knee over foot.** Keep each knee pointing over your second toe and never let it cave inward (called **valgus**). Your knee may travel forward past your toes; that is fine as long as it stays lined up
- **Land soft and quiet**, bending at the hips and knees to absorb the force

The 10-Minute Routine

1. Dynamic warm-up (2 min)

Exercise	Time / reps	How to do it
Jogging in place with high knees and butt kicks	1 min	Start with a light jog, then mix in 15 sec of high knees and 15 sec of butt kicks to raise your heart rate and warm up the legs
Walking lunges with torso twist	1 min	Step forward into a lunge, keeping the front knee lined up over your foot . As you lower, twist your torso over the front leg. Push off and alternate legs. Warms up the hips, legs, and core

2. Activation and strength (4 min)

Exercise	Time / reps	How to do it
Bodyweight squats	1 min (15–20 reps)	Feet shoulder-width apart. Sit your hips back and down as if into a chair, chest up and knees over your feet . Go as low as you can with good form
Glute bridges	1 min (15–20 reps)	On your back, knees bent, feet flat. Squeeze your glutes to lift your hips into a straight line from shoulders to knees. Hold 1 sec at the top, then lower slowly

Plank	30 sec	On forearms and toes, a straight line from head to heels. Brace your core and squeeze your glutes so the hips don't sag
Side plank	30 sec each side	On one forearm, lift your hips into a straight line from head to feet. Works the hip and core muscles that keep the knee from caving in

3. Landing and control (4 min)

Exercise	Time / reps	How to do it
Vertical jumps, focus on the landing	1 min (10–12 reps)	Jump straight up, but focus on the landing. Land softly on the balls of your feet and roll to the heels, hips and knees bent. Stick the landing for 2 seconds , knees not caving in
Single-leg hops, forward and back	30 sec each leg	Imagine a line on the ground. Hop forward and back over it on one leg. Control, not speed: land softly and keep the knee over the foot
Lateral hops, side to side	30 sec each leg	Stand on one leg next to the line and hop side to side over it. Trains the muscles that stop the inward knee collapse during cutting
Deceleration runs	1 min (4–5 reps)	Run forward about 10 yards, then stop completely in 3 steps . Sink your hips back and down and finish in a balanced athletic stance. Walk back and repeat

Make it a habit

These routines work only when you do them consistently. It takes about **6–8 weeks** for the safer patterns to become automatic, and then they protect you when you are tired or reacting on instinct. Ten minutes before you play: no equipment, no excuses. If you have knee pain, swelling, or a recent injury, check with me first.

Learn more and watch the videos

For the research, my Full 30-Minute Program for serious athletes, and my ACL video series: merrittsurgery.com/surgeries/acl-injury-prevention



Scan to learn more
and watch videos

Watch: how the ACL works

Knowing how the knee works makes prevention easier to understand:
youtu.be/MGLFQBTXril



Scan to watch the
video