

# Cool-down

**Y**ou have just finished a hard training session or a competitive match. Your inclination may be to sit down and have a rest — but think again. Too many of us head straight to the changing rooms when we should perform a cool-down first, because a cool-

down helps to return the body to its pre-exercise state more rapidly.

A cool-down consists of some light exercise such as jogging to keep the heart rate elevated. The diagram below highlights how this can help.



Blood flow remains high and this allows oxygen to be flushed through the muscles, removing and oxidising any lactic acid that remains

Prevents blood pooling in the veins

Allows the skeletal muscle pump to keep working, which maintains venous return

Limits the effect of DOMS (delayed onset of muscle soreness). DOMS is characterised by tender, painful muscles, often experienced some 24–48 hours following hard exercise. This muscle soreness occurs from the structural damage to muscle fibres and the connective tissue surrounding the fibres. DOMS usually occurs following excessive eccentric contraction when the muscle fibres are put under a lot of strain. This type of muscular contraction occurs mostly with weight training and plyometrics.