

“Speed, Agility and Quickness (SAQ’s)”

By: Mind to Muscle Sports Conditioning Centre

SAQ’s are used to increase reaction time, motor skill, sport balance and co-ordination. This provides a player with the ability to quickly decelerate, change direction and accelerate for improved speed. SAQ’s are often used as “rehearsed” drills to establish muscle memory for many athletes. Such drills use your muscles in a “stretch-shortening cycle” which works much like a rubber band that is stretched and then snaps back together.

Hockey is a game of fast paced, multi-directional movement and positions. Players with higher levels of agility are often able to control their body position, reducing the potential for injury to occur. Therefore, preparing your body for unbalanced positions and hockey specific movements may prevent or greatly reduce risk of injury. Younger hockey players are advised to modify SAQ’s to decrease impact forces into their joints and growth plates. SAQ drills can be performed using your body weight as resistance but need to be progressive in order to develop and improve. Always focus on developing proper technique and begin with simple, low intense, general patterns and progress to complex, high intense, sport-specific patterns.

For hockey players, include lateral (sideways) movements, not just drills being performed in a straight line. As part of your exercise program, SAQ’s may be performed two or three times per week. For coaches, SAQ drills may be used as a dynamic warm-up for your team prior to a game. Try using a long hallway or the end of a rink so players have adequate room.

SAQ’s for hockey:

1. “X” pattern: with tape on the ground, outline a square with 60 cm sides marking only the 4 corners and the centre
 - begin with your feet on each of the bottom corners then jump to the centre (feet together) and continue to the top points forming an “X” pattern
 - repeat going back to the starting position
2. Triangle drill: place 3 markers in a triangular formation 3 to 6 m apart
 - run forward from a corner of the base of the triangle, pivot and backpedal at the peak towards the opposite corner
 - side shuffle across the base of the triangle to the starting position then repeat alternating clockwise/counter clockwise directions
3. Side shuffle to sprint: place 3 markers 5 to 10m apart
 - begin at the first marker by performing a side shuffle to the middle marker then pivot and accelerate in a forward to the third marker
 - repeat going back to the starting position facing the same direction