

Stretching tips

Flexibility vs. stretching

Flexibility is the ability to move a joint through its full range of motion without discomfort or pain.

Stretching can help increase flexibility by improving muscle elasticity.



Guidelines for stretching

It is recommended to stretch all major muscle groups with focus on muscles that are used during the workout.

- For static stretching, do 2–4 sets for each stretch and hold each stretch for 15–30 seconds.
- For dynamic stretching, perform each movement 4–5 times.

Stretching regimens should be done at least 2–3 times a week.

Never stretch to the point of pain and stop when you feel mild discomfort.

Do not hold your breath while stretching and breathe normally.

How to warm-up before physical activity

Stretching before physical activity increases heart rate, blood flow and body temperature; stretching prepares the muscles and joints for activity to help decrease risk of injury.

This can be completed by doing a 2–3 minute jog, walk or cycle, or even doing movements that mimic your workout. This can be paired with 5 minutes of dynamic stretching.

When performing pre-exercise warm-ups, gradually increase speed and intensity to reduce risk of injury.

How to cool down after physical activity

Performing cool-down activities after physical activity decreases heart rate, blood flow and blood pooling in muscles. It also helps the muscles relax and reduces muscle stiffness, soreness and also accumulation of lactic acid. Cooling down consistently after physical activity can also help increase range of motion.

This can be completed by doing a 2–3 minute jog, walk or cycle, followed by 5–10 minutes of static stretching. Make sure to gradually decrease speed and intensity to avoid injury.

Importance of flexibility

Flexibility helps:

- Keep the body agile
- Reduce joint stiffness
- Increase stride length
- Improve walking/running efficiency
- Decrease risk of injury
- Increase range of motion
- Contribute to correcting muscular imbalances

Some of the factors affecting flexibility include body temperature, time of day, genetic makeup, age, activity level and injury.

Types of stretching

Dynamic stretching is a movement type of stretching that uses the muscles to initiate stretches without holding the stretch. This is typically paired with warming up to prepare for physical activity. It is recommended to do smooth, fluid motions without any bouncing or jerking.

Static stretching is holding a position without movement. This is typically done after exercise.

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