

STRETCHING for RUNNERS and WALKERS

What is flexibility?

- the range of possible movement available in a joint and its surrounding muscles

Why should we stretch?

- may possibly help reduce injury (literature inconclusive)
- is part of full recovery from an injury to restore the joint to full normal movement in order to prevent a new injury as a consequence to the old one
- may aid in preparing the mind for the upcoming run/walk
- may help decrease anxiety about upcoming races
- may help decrease post-workout soreness

When should we stretch?

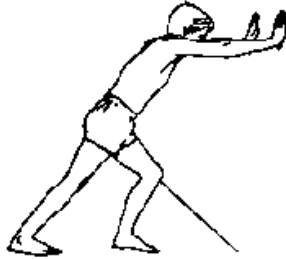
- only when muscles are warm; therefore either after a warm-up or at the end of an exercise bout
- warm up is not considered stretching – it is starting to exercise slowly, and gradually increasing the pace and intensity over a 5 minute period
- **Did you Know?**
 - when you get up in the morning, muscles are 10% shorter than their normal resting length
 - as you move around, muscles stretch to normal length
 - when you start to exercise, muscles stretch to about 10% longer than their resting length
 - muscles work more efficiently when they are longer and are less prone to injury – including injury from stretching cold

How should we stretch?

- Static stretches (constant hold)
 - 30 second holds are recommended
- NOT ballistic stretches (bouncing at the end of range)
- Dynamic stretches – sport specific movements
 - Ex: High Knees, Ankle/Knee bends, Hip swinging front and back
- Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF) Stretches
 - Contract-relax : contracting the opposite muscle to the one you are stretching
 - Hold-relax: contracting the muscle you are stretching
 - Use 5 second contract, 15 second relax/stretch, 3-5 repetitions
- All stretches must occur within a pain-free range or else the stretch is counterproductive

What are some suggested beneficial stretches?

Gastrocnemius Stretch – The leg you want to stretch is back, several feet from the wall, your heel firmly positioned on the floor with feet pointing straight towards the wall. Your other leg is flexed about halfway between your back leg and the wall. Start with you back straight and gradually lunge forward until you feel the stretch in your calf.



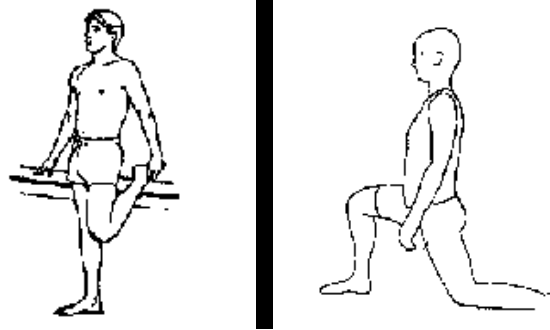
Soleus Stretch – Position yourself similar to the gastroc stretch with back straight and palms against the wall. The difference is that you start in a “seated” position with your legs bent, your buttocks dropped. Gently lean into the wall until you feel the stretch in your lower calf.



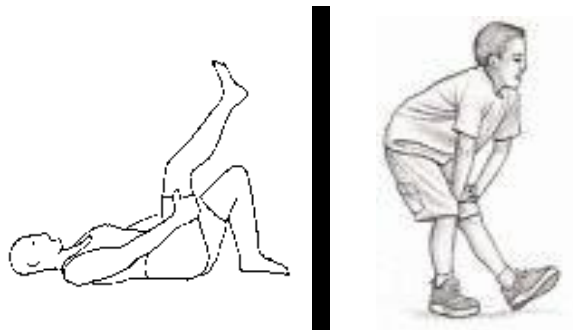
Gluteal Stretch – Lying on your back, cross the ankle of the leg you wish to stretch over the knee of the other leg. Grasping the “under” leg with both hands, pull the knee toward your chest until you feel the stretch in your buttocks and hips.



Quadriceps/Hip Flexor Stretches – You want to keep your back straight and keep the stretch leg behind the stance leg. A lot of people slouch forward or arch their backs, both of which effectively negates the stretch’s effectiveness. To increase the stretch at the front of your thigh, bring your thigh further behind your stance leg.



Hamstring Stretches - Keep the natural curve in your back for either stretch. In the first one, grasp the back of your thigh with both hands and (leg bent) pull that thigh into a 90 degree position. Slowly straighten your knee until you feel a good stretch along the back of your thigh. For an easy stretch mid exercise, straighten your knee and place your heel in front of your stance leg. Sit back until you feel a good hamstring stretch.



TFL Stretch – Tuck the leg of the side you wish to stretch behind your other leg. Then lean away from that hip. To increase the stretch, reach your same side arm over your head. You may need to bend the opposite leg to feel the stretch in the side of your hip.

