

### How often to stretch?

This becomes a personal preference, but the general rule is that one should stretch whenever they exercise, if you don't exercise though stretching at least 3 times a week can help to maintain flexibility.

### Things to avoid when stretching:

Majority of experts believe that ballistic or bouncing during a stretch is dangerous as it is thought that when a muscle is rapidly stretched followed by a short relaxation period the muscle contracts as a reflex reaction, which can lead to potential tears within the muscle and tendons. Also during the stretch make sure you breathe calmly and slowly, avoid holding your breath.

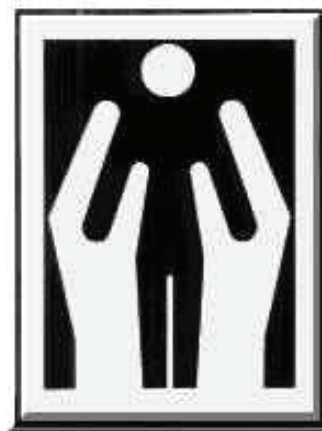
### Sources:

Mayoclinic and Pubmed central



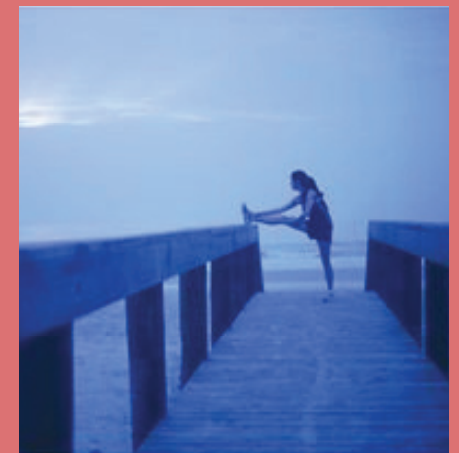
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## THE IMPORTANCE OF STRETCHING



## Why Stretch?

There has been much reported about stretching and whether it is or is not beneficial, but many of these studies look at professional athletes and whether or not stretching reduces the risk of injury. For what it is worth the results of these studies are mixed but the overall consensus seems to be that the greatest benefit of stretching occurs whilst the muscles are warm.

But what about the regular people who work out a few times a week or the weekend warriors, those of us who aren't elite athletes. Are there benefits of stretching and if there are benefits, what stretches should we do, how long do we hold them for, how should we stretch and what should we avoid doing when stretching.

Most aerobic exercises and strengthening/resistance training programs inherently result in muscle contraction or shortening. Likewise tension/stress and poor posture also involve shortened muscles. Stretching reverses this state by lengthening the muscle.

## Benefits of Stretching

The benefits that can be achieved through stretching include:

- + Stretching increases flexibility. Flexible muscles can improve your daily performance, such as bending over to put on your shoes or lifting packages.
- + Stretching improves range of motion of your joints. Good range of motion keeps you in better balance, which will help keep you mobile and less prone to injury from falls — especially as you age.
- + Stretching improves circulation. Stretching increases blood flow to your muscles. Improved circulation can speed recovery after muscle injuries. It also helps to reduce post-exercise soreness.
- + Stretching promotes better posture. Frequent stretching keeps your muscles from getting tight, allowing you to maintain proper posture and minimize aches and pains.
- + Stretching can relieve stress. Stretching relaxes the tense muscles that often accompany stress.
- + Stretching may help prevent injury. Preparing your muscles and joints for activity can protect you from injury, especially if your muscles or joints are tight.

## How long should one stretch for?

Studies have shown that those who stretch for 30 seconds per muscle each day increased their range of motion much more than those who stretched for only 15 seconds per muscle each day.

## Which muscles should be stretched?

As a general rule of thumb, stretch all the major muscle groups and joints you routinely use at work and when exercising.

## How to stretch:

There are many different ways to stretch but the most basic is static stretching which involves stretching a muscle until you feel a slight pulling sensation but with no pain. As you hold the stretch the muscle will begin to relax. As you feel the muscle relax, slowly increase the intensity of the stretch until you feel that pulling sensation again. Repeat this until you can feel no further relaxation in the muscle or increases in your range of motion. If you do not seem to be achieving any increases in your range of motion, try holding the stretch for longer.