

LIVING FIT! WITH Stretching Exercise

What are stretching exercises?

- ▶ Stretching exercises elongate specific muscles or muscle groups to their fullest length
- ▶ Stretching is natural and instinctive – like when we yawn we often stretch

Why should I stretch?

- ▶ May ↑ flexibility¹ and joint range of motion¹
- ▶ May improve posture⁴
- ▶ May ↓ muscle soreness³

How do I safely stretch?

- ▶ Always check with your healthcare provider first
- ▶ Safety first
 - Proper technique – be sure you feel the stretch in the muscle you are stretching
 - No bouncing
- ▶ Gently ease into the stretch position then relax as you hold it
- ▶ Hold stretch for 30 to 60 seconds (perform each stretch twice for added benefit)
- ▶ Stretch left and right sides
- ▶ Think...



- **Start low:** Begin with a gentle stretch without any weight
- **Progress slow:** Breathe and gently move further into the stretch as your muscle relaxes
- **Pain "No!":** If you are new to a stretch, you may feel some discomfort as your muscles are working and stretching. You should work through this discomfort at first, but be aware that increasing pain is a warning signal which means some body part is being misused or injured. Slow down if you feel increasing pain.
 - If you get a bleed, follow the treatment recommendations of your healthcare provider
 - **RICE:** Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation!



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- Resume activity slowly and without pain under the advice of your healthcare provider
- **Goal = Six - "O's":** Perform stretches during your warm-up and cool-down as part of your 60 minutes of daily exercise^{1,2}
- **Ready? GO!**

Examples⁵:

Piriformis



Hamstring (Supine) Lower



Hip Flexor



Triceps



Calf



1 US Department of Health and Human Services. 2008 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS. Washington, DC: US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2008. ODPHP Publication U0036.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Physical activity for everyone. http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/what_counts.html. [March 2, 2010]

3 Bacurau RFP, Monteiro GA, Ugriniwitsch C, Tricoli V, Cabral LF, Aoki MS. Acute effect of a ballistic and a static stretching bout on flexibility and maximal strength. J of Strength and Conditioning Research 2009; 23(1):304-308.

4 Weerapong P, Hume PA, Kolt GS. Stretching: mechanisms and benefits for sport performance and injury prevention. Phys Ther Rev 2004; 9 (4): 189-206.

5 Stretching caricatures are based off of illustrations found on Visual Health Information. <http://www.vhikits.com>. [September, 2009]