

Flexibility and Dynamic Stretching Resource

Flexibility is one of the vital components of feeling physically fit and in some cases a lack of flexibility can be a contributing factor to injuries and/or joint and muscle pain. Tight muscles can lead to improper function and can be a cause of reduced strength and power.

Also have you noticed as you are aging you are starting to feel a bit stiffer and tighter, don't you just love the aging process?! Exercise and stretching will help your joints and muscles function optimally and help you feel that little bit younger!!

Dynamic stretching

Dynamic stretching involves stretching your muscles out by moving joints through full ranges of motion using **controlled** swinging or bouncing motions.

This type of stretching should be done after a 5-10 minute warm up, preparing your muscles for the proceeding workout.

Ensure you brace your lower core muscles and stand with your knees and toes in alignment to prevent any tension on your lower back and knees.

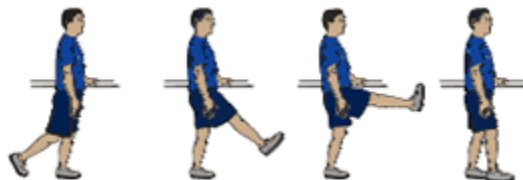
The range of movement can gradually be increased as your muscles and joints loosen up.

Repeat movements about 10-12 times, spending about 5 minutes on dynamic stretches to complete your warm up.

Try the following Dynamic stretches:

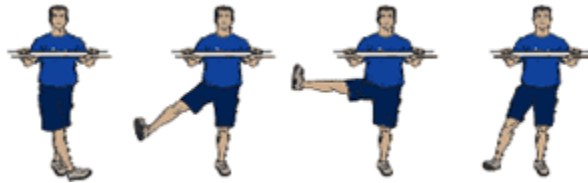
Leg swings forward and back (Stretches buttocks, front and back of thigh)

- 1) Hold on to a solid object and balance on one leg.
- 2) In a controlled rhythm swing the other leg forwards to a comfortable height ensuring that your trunk and lower back stay rigid and do not bend.
- 3) Then swing the leg backwards, again ensuring that there is little movement in your back.
- 4) Try and keep your hips facing forwards and the knee of your swinging leg straight when swinging forward and slightly bent when swinging behind.
- 5) Perform stretch on the other leg.
- 6) Swing to a height that suits your flexibility. Forcing the leg high by swinging too hard may result in injury.



Leg swings side to side (Stretches back and inner thigh)

- 1) Hold on to something stable and balance on one leg.
- 2) Turn your foot outwards on the leg you are balancing on.
- 3) Swing the other leg sideways across your body in front of the other grounded leg.
- 4) Be sure you keep your trunk as stationary as possible using your abdominal muscles to brace.
- 5) Repeat with the other leg.



Knee overs (Stretches buttocks and inner thigh)

- 1) Hold on to something stable and stand with one leg behind the other.
- 2) Lift the back leg knee high to the front and then rotate the leg outwards returning to the start position.
- 3) Be sure you keep your trunk as stationary as possible using your abdominal muscles to brace.
- 4) Repeat with the other leg.



Calf stretch (Stretches calf muscles)

- 1) Kneel down and position your body as if you were on the starting blocks of a sprinting race, supporting your weight on your hands and feet.
- 2) Start stretching your calves by pushing one heel towards the ground then onto the ball of the foot and then back again.
- 3) Alternate between legs.



Upper body trunk rotation (Stretches trunk muscles and chest)

- 1) Stand in a neutral stance with your feet shoulder/hip distance apart, your back straight and knees slightly bent.
- 2) Start by swinging your arms across your body at waist height – you should feel this mostly in your lower back.
- 3) To change the area of your back that you feel the stretch move your arms higher to around shoulder height and then up above your head.
- 4) If you find a tight area do extra repetitions to loosen it up without forcing the movement.



Bent over upper body rotation (Stretches trunk muscles, chest, inner and back thigh)

- 1) With your feet double shoulder/hip width apart, bend your knees a little and bend at the hips ensuring that your spine stays long and back doesn't round out.
- 2) Extend both arms out to your side at shoulder height like an aeroplane.
- 3) Rotate the trunk and arms to reach towards the opposite toe while bending that leg, swing to the opposite side and repeat.
- 4) Reach as low as your flexibility comfortably allows (i.e. tension not pain) – it is not necessary to touch your toes if you can't reach that low.



Arm circles (Stretches surrounding shoulder muscles)

- 1) Stand in a neutral stance with your back straight and knees slightly bent.
- 2) Swing both your arms around in circles together while bracing your core and keeping your back still.
- 3) If you find tightness in an area, spend more time in the area to loosen it up.
- 4) Swing arms both forwards and backwards.



Lunges / lunge walks (Stretches side trunk, back, hip and leg muscles)

- 1) Keep your trunk upright at all times.
- 2) Take a large step forward and drop your body down between your legs bending both knees to right angles at the bottom of each step.
- 3) The front knee should be pointing in the same direction as the toes and shouldn't be too far forward over the toes.
- 4) Alternate between legs.



Progression: The arm on the “back leg” side reaches up and over to the other side on each step. The stretch will mostly be felt down the sides of your trunk. For an extra challenge - try doing the walk forwards and backwards.