

# STRETCHING

A balanced exercise routine includes [aerobic](#) activity, [strength training](#), and stretching. Stretching not only feels good, but may help prevent muscle injuries. We need to take an active role in maintaining and improving the length of our muscles so we can continue to enjoy our abilities without pain.

To get the most out of your routine, you should try [dynamic stretches](#) before working out in order to **warm up** to accomplish a full range of motion of joints; and **static stretching** after a workout for about 5-10 minutes with gentle movements to **cool down** your body.

Stretching properly may reduce muscle injuries and improve athletic performance. It also increases:

- flexibility.
- joint range and motion.
- blood flow to muscles.

## STRETCHING THE RIGHT WAY

Here are some tips on how to stretch properly:

- ★ **Stop if it hurts.** Stretching should never hurt. You need to respect your body. Reach a stretch point that you can hold comfortably.
- ★ **Hold each stretch for 10-30 seconds.** You don't have to spend a long time holding a stretch. In fact, overstretching muscles may cause injury and decrease performance.
- ★ **Don't bounce.** Bouncing while stretching may injure the muscle you're stretching
- ★ **Remember to breath.** You mustn't hold your breath when you stretch. Inhale slowly and relax into the stretch as you breathe out.
- ★ **Stretch both sides.** Big differences in flexibility may lead to injury
- ★ **Stretch regularly.** In order to maintain flexibility, you have to stretch at least 3 days a week.

1. Here you have some of the most common stretching exercises you could include in your cooling down routine. Can you guess which picture matches its description? Drag and drop.



**Lunging Hip Flexor Stretch**



**Standing Hamstring Stretch**



**Seated Shoulder Squeeze**



**Side Bend Stretch**

1. Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, knees slightly bent, arms by your sides.

2. Exhale as you bend forward at the hips, lowering your head toward the floor, while keeping your head, neck and shoulders relaxed.

3. Wrap your arms around the backs of your legs and hold anywhere from 45 seconds to two minutes.

1. Kneel on the floor with your legs together, back straight, and core tight.

2. Extend your left leg out to the side. Keep it perpendicular to your body (not in front or behind you).

3. Extend your right arm overhead, rest your left arm on your left leg, and gently bend your torso and right arm to the left side.

4. Keep your hips facing forward.

5. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds to 2 minutes and repeat on the other side.

1. Kneel on your left knee. Place your right foot flat on the floor in front of you, knee bent.

2. Lean forward, stretching your left hip toward the floor.

3. Squeeze your butt; this will allow you to stretch your hip flexor even more.

4. Hold for 30 seconds.

5. Switch sides and repeat

1. Sit on the floor with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.

2. Clasp your hands behind your lower back.

3. Straighten and extend your arms and squeeze your shoulder blades together.

4. Do this for 3 seconds, and then release. Repeat 5 to 10 times.

2. Now match each stretching exercise with its name.

**Seated Neck Release**



**Standing Quad Stretch**



**Butterfly Stretch**



**Figure Four Stretch**



**Sphinx Pose**



Adapted from:

<https://www.self.com/gallery/essential-stretches-slideshow>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/stretching.html>