

Flexibility

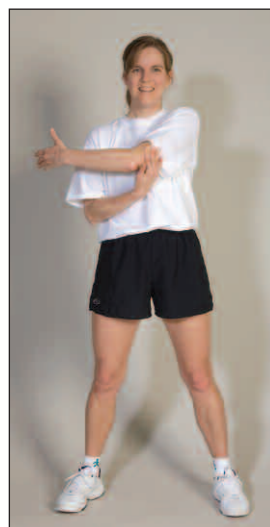
Flexibility is the ability of a joint and a muscle group to move through a range of motion. Stretching helps improve flexibility.

Stretching tips

- Warm your muscles before stretching them by doing at least 5 minutes of low-intensity activity such as walking or marching in place.
- Start each stretch slowly.
- Stretch only to a point of *mild* discomfort. Stop if you feel pain.
- Concentrate on using proper form as you stretch.
- Hold each stretch for 15-30 seconds. Do not bounce.
- Breathe deeply and continuously. Avoid holding your breath.
- For best results, perform each stretch 2-3 times.
- Stretch at least 2 to 3 days a week and always before and after exercising.

Chest stretch

- Stand beside a wall with the right side of your body closest to the wall.
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees slightly bent.
- Reach your right arm behind you, and place the palm of your hand on the wall at shoulder level.
- Slowly rotate your hips and upper body to the left until you feel a stretch in your chest and right shoulder.
- Hold this position for 15-30 seconds.
- Slowly return to starting position.
- Turn so that the left side of your body is closest to the wall, and repeat this stretch using the left arm.

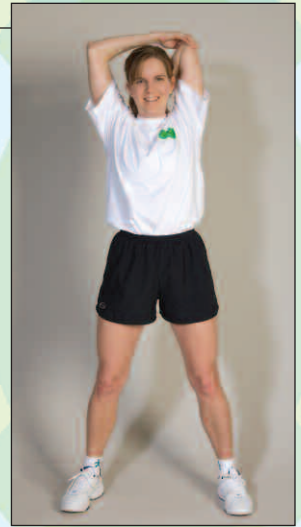


Shoulder stretch

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent.
- Bend your left arm at the elbow and extend across chest.
- Place your right hand above or below the left crossed elbow and gently press with your right hand until you feel a stretch across your left shoulder.
- Hold position for 15-30 seconds; slowly return to the start position.
- Repeat with the other shoulder.

Triceps stretch

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent.
- Bend your left arm at elbow joint; lift arm next to your head.
- Position left fingers so they touch your shoulder blade area.
- Place right arm across the top of your head, and place right hand above the left elbow; gently press with the right hand until you feel a stretch in the back of your upper left arm.
- Hold for 15-30 seconds; slowly return to the start position.
- Repeat with the other arm.



Inner-thigh stretch

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Slowly bend the left knee, shifting your body weight toward the left and keeping your right leg straight.
- Do not let your left knee extend beyond the toes of your left foot.
- You should be able to see the toes of your left foot when you look down at your left knee. If you cannot see your left toes, then move your feet farther apart from each other.
- You should feel a stretch in your inner thigh.
- If you do not feel a stretch, then bend forward slightly at the waist, keeping your back straight.
- Hold this position for 15-30 seconds; slowly return to the start position.
- Repeat on the opposite side.



Outer-thigh stretch

- Sit comfortably on the ground with your legs straight in front of you.
- Bend your right leg, cross it over your left leg, and put your right foot flat on the ground on the left side of your left knee.
- Your left leg should still be straight in front of you.
- Slowly rotate your upper body toward the right.
- As you rotate, reach your right hand behind you, and place it palm-down on the ground behind your right hip.
- Continue to rotate to the right until you can place your left arm on the right side of your right leg. Turn your head, and look to the right.
- You should feel a stretch in your right hip and possibly in your back as well.
- Keep your buttocks flat on the ground.
- Hold this position for 15-30 seconds; slowly return to the start position.
- Repeat on the opposite side.





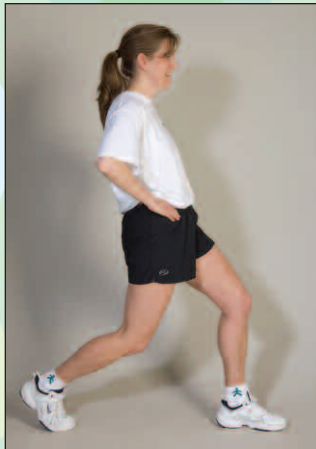
Modified hurdler hamstring stretch

- Sit on the floor with your right leg extended and your left leg bent in toward your right thigh.
- Keep your chin and chest lifted and gently bend down toward your extended right leg.
- Reach as far as you can toward your toes.
- Hold this position for 15-30 seconds; slowly sit back up.
- Repeat with the other leg.



Quadriceps stretch

- Stand on your left foot, tightening your abdominal muscles to help you balance.
- Bend your right knee, and bring your right foot up behind you.
- Steady yourself by extending your left hand in front of you or placing it on a chair, if necessary, and use your right hand to grab the right ankle, pulling your right foot toward your buttocks until you feel a stretch along the front side of your right thigh.
- Keep your knees as close together as you can, and keep your left knee slightly bent as it supports your body weight.
- Hold this position for 15-30 seconds; slowly return to the start position.
- Repeat with the opposite leg.



Hip flexor

- Step your left foot in front of your right foot.
- Keep weight over your front foot.
- Slowly drop right knee down towards the ground, bending the front knee.
- Press hip of your right leg forward and hold for 15-30 seconds.
- Repeat with the opposite leg.



Calf stretch

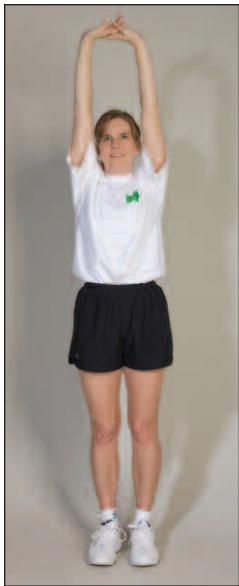
- Step your left foot in front of your right foot.
- Bend your left knee slightly.
- Make sure that you can see your left toes when you look down toward your left knee.
- If you cannot see your left toes, then move your right foot back farther.
- Keep the heels of both feet on the ground.
- Lean slightly forward so that you feel a stretch in the back of your lower right leg.
- Hold this position for 15-30 seconds; slowly return to the start position.
- Repeat this stretch on the opposite side.

Upper back stretch

- Lift your arms in front of chest, palms facing forward.
- Stretch through your upper back, gently pushing palms forward.
- Hold for 15-30 seconds and slowly return to start position.

Lower back stretch

- Lie on your back with your arms by your side.
- Bend your knees, lift your feet off the ground, and bring your knees toward your chest. Place your hands behind your knees, and continue to pull your knees into your chest until you feel a stretch in your lower back and buttocks.
- Hold this position for 15-30 seconds; slowly return your feet to the ground.



Torso stretch

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent.
- Lift arms over your head, clasp hands and hold 15-30 seconds.
- Do not arch your back.

Back and abdominal stretch

- Start on "all fours" in the position of a child who is preparing to crawl.
- Round your back by contracting your abdominal muscles and tucking in your hips.
- Keep your head in line with your neck and spine.
- Hold this position for 15-30 seconds to stretch your back.
- Return to starting position.
- Arch your back by gently pushing your stomach toward the floor.
- Keep your head in line with your neck and spine.
- Hold this position for 15-30 seconds to stretch your abdominals.
- Slowly return to starting position.

