

***Always consult your physician before starting any exercise program.**

Some people are naturally more flexible than others. Age, gender, genetics and physical activity level all play a role. In addition to cardiovascular exercise and strength training, stretching should be a regular part of your exercise routine. Although many people often stretch before workouts, it is actually recommended that static stretching such as holding poses for longer than 90 seconds be done following workouts, when muscles are warm. Stretching before exercise has been shown to be detrimental to performance and decrease power in working muscles.

An active dynamic warm-up such as brisk walking and fluid movements like arm circles and leg swings can enhance joint flexibility and improve range of motion for activity ahead. Although many people do not stretch because of time constraints spending just five minutes to stretch following a workout can be beneficial.

Benefits of Stretching

- Increased mobility and better range of motion
- Improved posture
- Decreases the risk of low-back pain
- Improves efficiency and performance



Stretching Techniques

- **Static stretching:** Most common, involves holding a pose to target a specific muscle group for 30 seconds or more.
- **Dynamic stretching:** Involves stretching and mobility exercises that use constant movement. Dynamic stretching is often used for sport-specific activity such as arm circles performed prior to swimming or leg swings to warm up hips before running.
- **Ballistic stretching:** Considered less safe than other forms of stretching due to increased potential for muscle strains. Typically used for sport-specific drills and involves repetitive bouncing such as bouncing to touch the toes, for example, in gymnastics.
- **Myofascial release:** Often done with a foam roller or Lacrosse ball, it can improve range of motion and quality of movement. Small continuous movements on the ball or foam roller targeting a specific area of 2 - 6 inches for 30 - 60 seconds can decrease tension in muscles, improve blood flow and circulation and decrease pain.

References:

1. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2015, from <http://www.acefitness.org/acefit/healthy-living-article/60/3248/to-stretch-or-not-to-stretch/>
2. Flexible Benefits. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2015, from <http://www.acefitness.org/acefit/fitness-fact-article/2610/flexible-benefits/>

