



Mobility and Flexibility

How do you typically warm up for an exercise session? Do you stretch? Do you warm up at all or just jump right into your workout?

Most people think that stretching prior to your workout is helpful to prevent injury. The reality is that warming up and working on your mobility prior to exercise is more helpful for injury prevention. Warming up is basically preparing the body for activity. Stretching is recommended following your workout. Stretching focuses on increasing your flexibility. A 5-10 minute warm-up or mobility routine prior to your exercise session, with a full body stretching routine following your workout could be beneficial. This is the recommendation for both cardio and strength training. It doesn't take long and is absolutely worth the effort.

Below are basic routines and exercises that can be added as you see fit. For each exercise, start with one set of 5-10 repetitions. We are not trying to exhaust the body, just warm it up.

WARM-UP: a quick 5-minute session on a treadmill, bike, elliptical, or walking followed by a mobility warm-up.

WALL SLIDES: This is a great exercise to warm up your shoulders and upper body. Put your back against the wall, and slide your arms up and down, keeping your forearms and backs of hands against the wall.

LEG SWINGS: Put your hands on the wall, swing one leg forward and backward for 5-10 repetitions, followed by lateral swings for 5-10 repetitions. This is great for warming up the hips.

HIP BRIDGES: Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor, and thrust your hips to the sky for 5-10 repetitions. This will warm up your glutes.

BIRD DOGS: Get on your hands and knees; reach opposite arm and opposite leg. This is great for warming up the hips and shoulders.

UPPER BACK ROTATIONS: Staying on your hands and knees, place one hand behind the head, and rotate 5-10 times, warming up the upper back.

ARM CIRCLES: Straighten your arms horizontally, and rotate forward then backward.

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SHOULDER ROLLS: Place your arms by your sides, and rotate or roll your shoulders forward then backward.

WRIST ROTATIONS: Finally, rotate each wrist 5-10 repetitions in each direction.

You are ready to start your workout!

Following your workout, while your body is still warm is the best time for stretching. Hold each of these stretches 30 seconds for one set (longer if you like). You should feel a mild stretch: not stretching to the point of pain. Be sure to remember to breathe while holding the stretch. Regular stretching following a workout can help improve your mobility and flexibility.

OVERHEAD SHOULDER STRETCH: Lock your fingers together, and reach your hands above your head, standing tall. Hold for 30 seconds.

CHEST STRETCH: Lock your fingers, and reach behind you, feeling the stretch in your shoulders and chest.

TRICEPS: Reach a hand over your head, bend at the elbow, and use the other hand to pull the elbow downward, feeling the tension in your triceps (back of the arm). Switch arms after 30 seconds.

BACK STRETCH: Lie flat on your back, raise your knee across the body, and hold that position. Feel the stretch in your lower back. Switch legs after 30 seconds.

GROIN STRETCH: Sit up straight, bend your knees, put the bottoms of your feet together, and bring them in close. Lean forward, and feel that stretch in the groin area.

HAMSTRING STRETCH: Tuck one leg in close, straightening the other. Lean forward over the straight leg, and feel the stretch in the back of your leg, lowering yourself slowly. Switch legs, and do the other side.

QUADRICEPS STRETCH: Stand up, hold onto something for support, and bend your knee, grabbing your foot with your hand. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds then switch sides.

CALF STRETCH: Remain standing. Place your hands on the wall with one foot in front and one foot behind. Next, bend your front leg with your back leg straight; press into the wall and feel the calf stretch. Hold for 30 seconds on each leg.

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With implementing these every time you work out, you should notice your flexibility is improved, and you should have less joint pain and stiffness overall.