

Stretching Seminar

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In this seminar, I will be discussing the importance of stretching. And, I will be demonstrating specific exercises that you can incorporate into your training program. It is vitally important to do a stretching routine in your program to prevent injuries from occurring. The reason for this is the preparation for your workouts is what will keep you injury free. We want to prepare the muscle for the stress we are about to place on it. Now there's a difference in the variation of our workouts, so how much time do we spend in stretching for those specific workouts?

Well let me give you a comparison, the greater the intensity [of the workout] the longer we should spend stretching. So take for instance one of your key workouts, being an interval training workout [aka track training]. In that particular workout, we would spend the most time in a stretching routine, as opposed to our endurance run where we would be using less capacity of the muscle. However, when doing so, we want to make sure we are stretching the key muscles for each specific workout.

The stretching routine that I'm about to show you [includes] about 15 stretches to stretch each major muscle that you can become familiar with so you can start using as part of your training program.

Take your time in learning each of these exercises. If anyone of them is new to you, be careful on how much you are asking that muscle to stretch. Listen to your body and just hold it to what feels comfortable for you.

Stretching Demonstration:

A Stretch



This exercise is called an A-stretch. We are working the hamstrings, gluts, adductors and lower back. You want to extend you legs to where you feel comfortable in holding the position [and bend over toward the ground grabbing both ankles if possible]. We want to be careful in the depth that you are asking the muscle to stretch to. So, you can very much go to the knees and you want to keep sure you are keeping the back straight, in this particular stretch.

Side A-Stretch



[Keeping your feet in the same position, reach for one ankle only and hold for 20 seconds then reach for the other.] I do recommend that you do stretch the muscles in the order of this video. We have video set for 20 seconds for each stretch per muscle group so you can stretch along with me for any workout. However, when you are stretching alone, and feel you need that added time in any particular muscle group, by all means hold the stretch so you get that extra length and prevent any tightness.

Side Lunge



[With your feet in the same position as the A-stretch, lunge down to one side and then the other.] This stretch is called a side lunge. In this stretch we are working on the adductors, which are your inner thighs. Things to remember is that your supportive foot is straight

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[pointing to the] front and not to the side. You want to make sure you are going to the depth that is comfortable for your knee. And, you are relaxing the lower back to go into that stretch.

Take your time in learning this routine, because you will find as you move along in your program, that each muscle will give you more length and you will find the flexibility enhancing your training.

Lunge



This stretch is a forward lunge. [Standing up with your feet together, take a step forward a full step and bring your back knee toward the ground. When you are done with one side do the other side.] You're working your quadriceps, hip flexors and also in your supportive leg, your gluts. We want to make sure in this stretch that the knee is directly over your foot, in the supportive leg. You are keeping your back straight. And you are going to the depth that is comfortable in holding that position. It is important to remember not to let the knee go in front of your foot.

Bent Over Cross-over



This stretch is called a bent over cross-over. [Standing up with your feet together, take one foot and put it on the other side of the other foot. Bend over with your back straight reaching toward your ankles. When you are done with one side do the other side.] We are working at stretching the hamstrings, your gluts and your lower back. The leg in front is preventing the back leg from bending. Keep in mind you want to go to the depth that's comfortable and that you are keeping your back straight.

Another thing to keep in mind is that each of these stretches should finish in the starting position for each muscle group.

Seated Toe Touch



[Sit on the ground with your legs straight out in front of you. Reach for your toes.] This exercise is a seated toe touch. We are working on stretching the hamstrings, the calves and the lower back. Again, we want to extend the hands out to the toes. If you cannot reach your toes you can go to the knees and work towards the toes.

Reverse Hurdle Stretch



[Sit on the ground. Extend one leg straight forward and bring your other foot toward your upper inner thigh. Reach toward your extended foot.] This stretch is a reverse hurdle

stretch. You are working on stretching your hamstrings and calves on that extended leg. And by reaching over to that leg, you are involving your obliques on the opposite side [of your stomach area]. On the knee that's bent you are stretching the adductors and groin area.

The correct position in the extended leg is we want to keep the knee as straight as possible. The foot should be in a dorsiflex position while [reaching for] your foot, meaning your toes are coming toward your body. In the bent leg, we want to bring the foot in as close as possible to the position that we need.

Butterflies



[Sitting on the ground, bend your knees and put the bottom of your feet together. Push down lightly on your knees.] This stretch is called the butterfly. In this stretch we want to make sure the back is straight. You're bringing your feet in as close as possible, where you will keep your back straight. We are working on stretching your adductors, which are your inner thighs, your groin, and your lower back. And again, just remain in the position that you feel comfortable.

Seated Crossovers



[Sitting on the ground, extend one leg straight out. Take the other foot and place it on the ground on the other side of the straight leg by the upper leg. Pull the knee toward your chest toward your opposite shoulder, keeping your lower back straight.] This stretch is called a seated crossover. We are stretching the gluts, the lateral hamstring, the lower back and the obliques. We want to keep the back straight at all times. In this stretch we have a goal of bringing the knee crossing over to the opposite shoulder. You can start by holding the position with your hands and moving [your arms so that your knee] is in the opposite forearm.

Hurdle Stretch



[Sitting on the ground, extend one leg straight out. Bend the other leg back, placing the other foot by your gluts or butt. Reach toward your extended foot.] This stretch is called a hurdle stretch. We have a couple of things going on here, in this stretch. In the extended leg we are stretching the hamstring and calve, and we have that foot in a dorsi flex position. We are also involving the lower back. When we start moving back to where our back is on the ground, we are stretching the quadriceps and hip flexors. You want to keep in mind on this stretch you are only go back to the distance where you can keep your [bent] knee on the ground. So, if you feel that knee coming up, you've taken that stretch far enough at that particular time. However, as you move along, you will feel the hip flexors opening up and that the extension will be much greater. You will find it a great benefit when you're out there running.

In changing the position here, you will see the position of my [bent leg]. I have that foot tucked under [my glut]. Knee is out 45 degree angle at the hip. And we want to make sure we are keeping the foot under and not turning two joints, the ankle joint and the knee in opposite directions. This will make for a much more comfortable position when you go back to the extended [lying on your] back position. And again, hold the stretch to what you feel comfortable with.

An important thing to remember is to keep your spine straight. And by doing so, you will have your back in line with your extended leg. After stretching the quad, we then move back to the pre-stretch position.

Hip Flexors



[Facing the ground, place one foot toward the opposite hip. Keep the other leg extended out straight with the back.] This is called a hip flexor stretch. In this stretch we have the extended leg which is stretching the hip flexor. We have the foot of the opposite leg coming over to the hip of the extended leg. By bending the leg, we are stretching the glut and lateral hamstrings of that [bent] leg. We want to go to the depth that is comfortable in holding the stretch. The back leg should be as straight as possible. Your foot is in a planterflex position, meaning that your toe is pointed.

In this position we are stretching the lower back. And by extending our arms over our head we get a nice stretch in our upper back. Again, take your time doing these exercises and you'll find your body adapting very nicely to each one.

Standing Quad Stretch



[Standing with your feet together, take one foot back bending the knee. Hold foot with the opposite hand.] This stretch is called a standing quad stretch. It is stretching the quadriceps muscles. What we're doing in this stretch is that we want to take the opposite leg with the bent knee, holding that foot with the opposite hand. Hold the stretch on one foot by balancing yourself or holding a wall or other person. The nice thing about this stretch is that we can get the longest muscle in our quads the sartorius, which is a hip flexor along with a knee flexor. In doing this stretch, we will get a nice length in that muscle.

Calves Stretch



[Standing on a curb, place the ball of one foot on the curb pushing the heel downward. This can be done with a straight leg and a bent leg.] This leg is a calf stretch. We have two calves [muscles], primarily the gastrocnemius, which is more the upper calf and we have the soleus, which is the lower calf. By keeping your leg straight we are stretching primarily the upper calf. By bending the knee we are stretching the lower calf. So if you are feeling tightness in the lower [calf] by all means bend the knee in the stretch.

Advanced Stretches

The following stretches are advanced stretches. You need to be very careful when attempting these stretches. They are stretches that I have incorporated into my personal training over my entire career. I have found them very beneficial...

Overhead Straight Legged Stretch

Overhead Single Legged Stretch

Double Quad Stretch

Torso Twist

Cobra Stretch

To the Finish Line Safely

Take your time in learning each of these exercises. If any one is new to you, be careful how much you are asking that muscle to stretch. Keep in mind that as we age we can become more flexible. We just need to incorporate a stretching routine into our overall training program. And by doing so, we will get to the finish line safely.