

Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee

Researched & Written by Robert J. Bovee Certified Master PPT, RTS, ETS, FTS, LMS, WMS, HWFS, SNS,SSCS, MES, E/FT, PSCS, PRCS

STRETCHING

It's never too late to start stretching. In fact, the older we get, the more important it becomes to stretch on a regular basis. With age and inactivity, the body gradually loses its' range of motion; muscles can lose their elasticity and become weak and tight. But the body has an amazing capacity for the recovery of lost flexibility and strength if a regular program of fitness is followed.

If you stretch correctly and consistently, you will find that every movement you make will get easier to do. It will take time to loosen up your tight muscles or muscle groups, but once you have started your stretching routine you will begin to feel better.

When you begin a stretch, go to the point where you feel **mild** tension in the muscle you want to stretch. Hold this for **20** seconds. Always relax while you are holding a stretch. From the mild stretch position move a little further until you begin to feel a little tension in your muscle. Hold this position for another **10** to **20** seconds.

NEVER BOUNCE WHILE STRETCHING. Holding a stretch as far as you can and bouncing up and down will cause a strain in your muscles and activates a stretch reflex in the muscle. This reflex causes your muscle to automatically contract when you have stretched farther than your muscle can stretch. It is a reflex that is meant to keep the muscle from being injured. This stretching and contracting action can cause damage due to microscopic tears in the muscles, leading to the formation of scar tissue in the muscles and gradual loss of elasticity.

Stretching should never be painful. For a long time many of us were conditioned to believe "no pain, no gain". This is not so. You must learn to listen to your body. If you experience pain it is probably an indication that something is wrong.

BASIC TECHNIQUE OF STRETCHING

1. Hold a stretch in a comfortable position. The stretch tension should ease as you hold it.
2. Don't stretch too far, especially in the beginning. Get a slight stretch and increase as you are able.
3. Breathe slowly, deeply and naturally. Always exhale as you bend. Never stretch to a point where you cannot breathe normally.
4. Never bounce while stretching. Bouncing actually tightens the muscle you are trying to stretch.
5. Do not try to be flexible. Everyone has their own range of flexibility. Don't compare yourself with others. If you are tight or inflexible, don't let this keep you from stretching. Learn to stretch properly and your flexibility will increase in time.

BENEFITS OF STRETCHING

1. Reduces muscle tension and helps the body feel relaxed.
2. Helps coordination by allowing for freer and easier movement.
3. Increases range of motion of muscles/joints.
4. Prevents injuries such as muscle strains. (A strong, pre-stretched muscle will resist stress better than a strong, un-stretched muscle.)

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5. Prepares your body for activity.
6. Develops body awareness. As you stretch various parts of your body, you focus on them and get in touch with them. You get to know yourself and your body.
7. Promotes better circulation in the body.
8. IT FEELS GOOD!

Learn to stretch your body without force; stretch by how you feel. It will take time to loosen up tight muscles that have been this ways for years, but it can be done with patience and regularity. If you have any doubts about what you should be doing, please stop down at the fitness desk and ask for assistance.

For more information, please contact Robert J. Bovee at **(585) 330-0614**.