

Simple Stretches

Did you know that stretching before engaging in physical activity can improve your flexibility and range of motion and help to prepare your muscles? However, stretching cold muscles can cause injury so firstly you should do a light warm up to prepare the entire body. Warm ups should be something simple, like a brisk walk or jogging on the spot. After the warm up, you're ready to stretch!

When stretching, it's important to focus on the muscles you are going to use in the physical activity. For example, if you're going to play tennis, you may focus on stretches for the arms and upper body but for running you may focus on the legs and lower body. You should also do some general stretches to get the whole body ready to move!

Stretching should become routine for any physical activity. It often works best to start with the upper body and then move to the lower body. Children can try to hold stretches for about 10 to 30 seconds but the best guideline is, if it hurts just stop and only stretch to where you feel comfortable. Stretch again after physical activity to avoid stiffness and to help the muscles relax.

Here's a few simple stretches for you to try!

Upper Body Stretches

Cross-Body Stretch

- › Reach your right arm straight out in front of you
- › Place your left hand underneath your right arm, at the elbow
- › Use your left arm to gently press the right arm across your body until you feel a good stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds
- › Repeat the above steps with your left arm, again holding for 10-30 seconds

Arm Stretch

- › Stand with your arms outstretched to the side and thumbs pointing down
- › Gently push arms back as if you are squeezing a ball between your shoulder blades until you feel a nice stretch. Hold for 10-30 seconds and relax

Knees to Chest Stretch

- › Find a comfortable floor space. Lie on your back, arms flat beside you
- › Bend your knees, bringing them to their chest. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds
- › Straighten your legs out slowly and relax
- › Repeat as required



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Lower Body Stretches

Leg Stretch

- › Stand facing something steady like a wall or the back of a chair
- › Put your left arm on the wall for balance and put all your weight on your left leg
- › Bend the right leg up behind you and grab your right foot
- › Gently pull your foot backwards until you feel the stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds, and then switch legs

Hamstring Stretch

- › Sit on a mat or a comfortable floor space
- › Extend both legs in front of you, keeping your toes straight and pointing upwards, make sure to keep your back straight
- › Lean forward very slowly and reach for your toes. Hold this stretch for 10 to 30 seconds then relax and repeat as required (You don't have to tip your toes, just stretch as far as it's comfortable)

Butterfly Stretch

- › Sit on a mat or comfortable floor space
- › Try to sit as straight as possible
- › Gently pull your feet together so that the soles of your feet are facing each other
- › Hold them with your hands for 10 to 30 seconds
- › Relax and repeat as required

Upper and Lower Body Stretch

Toe-Touch stretch

- › Stand with arms relaxed at your side, keeping feet together
- › Gradually and very slowly, bend down from your back (without bending your knees) and reach towards your toes with your hands. Hold the stretch for 10 to 30 seconds (You don't have to tip your toes, just stretch as far as it's comfortable)
- › For an even greater challenge, you can try the same stretch crossing the legs while standing



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