



Full body stretching routine.

The great thing about stretching is that you don't have to spend a lot of time on the exercises to get the benefits.

This total body flexibility workout proves it with stretches so simple, you can do them anywhere: after a workout, at work, or even when you're watching TV.

Stretching tips.

- Always warm up the body prior to stretching, as this increases blood flow around the body.
- Focus on technique rather than the number of repetitions performed.
- Hold each stretch for 20-30 seconds unless otherwise stated.
- Remember to repeat for both sides of the body.
- Stretch to a limit that is not painful but a slight discomfort.
- Make sure you breathe in and out with each stretch.

Don't forget - a warm up and cool down (5 minute walk) is essential before you start these stretches.

Stretch routine.

Side stretch.

- Sitting or standing, clasp your hands straight up overhead, palms facing the ceiling.
- Stretch up and then over to the right, feeling a stretch down your left side.
- Hold for 20 to 30 seconds and switch sides.



Back stretch.

- Support your lower spine by placing your hands in the small of your back.
- Slowly and gently begin to arch your back. Only go as far back as you feel comfortable.
- Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
- Slowly and gently return to standing straight.
- Repeat one to three times.



Chest stretch.

- Sit or stand and clasp your hands together behind your back, arms straight.
- Lift your hands towards the ceiling, going only as high as is comfortable. You should feel a stretch in your shoulders and chest.
- Hold for 30 seconds, repeating one to three times.



Shoulder stretch.

- Take your right arm straight across your chest and curl the left hand around your elbow, gently pulling on the right arm to deepen the stretch in the shoulder.
- Try dropping the shoulder down if you're not feeling a stretch.
- Hold for 30 seconds and switch sides.



Wall calf stretch.

- Stand a little less than arm's distance away from the wall.
- Step your left leg forward and your right leg back, keeping your feet parallel.
- Bend your left knee and press through your right heel.
- Hold for 20 to 30 seconds and switch legs.



Quad stretch.

- Stand and hold onto a wall for balance if needed.
- Grab the top of the left foot and bend your knee, bringing the foot towards the glutes, knee pointing straight at the floor. You should feel a stretch right down the front of your leg.
- Squeeze your hips forward for a deeper stretch.
- Hold for 20 to 30 seconds and switch sides.



Standing hamstring stretch.

- Take your left foot forward and tip from the hips, keeping the back flat.
- Lower down until you feel a stretch in the back of the leg.
- Rest the hands on the upper thighs to give your back some support.
- Hold for 20 to 30 seconds and switch sides.



Neck stretch.

- Tilt your head to one side, as if you are trying to touch your shoulder with your ear.
- Slightly turn your head as if looking towards the sky.
- Apply GENTLE pressure to the top of your head with your hand to increase the stretch.
- Hold stretch for 20 to 30 seconds and repeat for the opposite side.



WHY STRETCH?

It increases your energy levels: Feeling sluggish? Stretching can help kick-start your body, and wake you up. During a stretch, your body senses the change in the muscle length and movement, and it prepares itself to become active by increasing blood flow. Increased blood flow throughout the body actually helps you feel more awake and alert, by delivering oxygen to your brain and other working muscles and organs.

It can reduce back pain (or your risk of developing it): Tight muscles can be a major cause of back pain. In fact, research shows that tight hamstrings accompany virtually all causes of chronic back pain.

It help to reduce stress and increases relaxation: The body's "fight or flight" response is triggered with stress and the body tenses up. Chronic pain arises in these places where tension is held, such as in the shoulders, lower back, neck and head. Stretching interrupts that defensive response and provides relief to the tense body. Stretching also promotes circulation of new blood to the brain, which can result in mood elevation.

It can reduce your risk of injury: A flexible muscle is less likely to become injured if you have to make a sudden move. By increasing the range of motion in a particular joint through stretching, you can decrease the resistance on your body's muscles during various activities.



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