

FOREVER ACTIVE

PERSONALIZED FITNESS AND WELLNESS FOR MEN 50+



Flexibility As You Age

Introduction

“Active Aging” is all about moving and keeping physically and mentally “active”. It is about enjoying life to its fullest as we move into our retirement years. Playing golf with our buddies, walking and bicycling along the water front with our spouse, working in the garden and doing household repairs that require climbing ladders and bending over, lifting and twisting are just some examples of aging in a productive “active” way. But how do go about achieving an active lifestyle as we grow older? Good dietary habits are certainly important, as is maintaining a healthy heart and strong leg, arm and core muscles. But probably the most over looked component of fitness and a key element of maintaining an active life style is Flexibility. Stretching our muscles, tendons and ligaments is not nearly as much fun or as glamorous as walking, running or biking along beautiful city paths or nature trails, or developing a strong attractive physique from lifting weights. But to do the things just mentioned requires your muscles, tendons and ligaments to be pliable, to be able to bend and move the way you want them to. As we age, our bodies become stiff and because we don’t move as well our muscles become weak which affects our ability to do the “fun” things in life that we would like and over time affect our ability to do the functional activities of daily living. “Active Aging” requires you to have good flexibility and the best way to maintain your flexibility is to know the proper ways to stretch. This newsletter will review the two types of stretching, dynamic and static, when you should do each of them and how to do them properly so you get the maximum benefit from your efforts.

Technique to Stretching

Muscle fibres needs to be stretched slowly and gently. You need to “relax” into the stretch regardless if you are performing a dynamic or static type stretch. If you push a muscle too aggressively into a stretch the muscle will initiate the “stretch reflex” and contract to guard itself against tearing. It is OK to feel some resistance and even a very mild discomfort but never pain. It is also important to breathe normally when you are stretching. A good cue is to visualize the muscle you are stretching actually lengthening. For effective muscle lengthening you need to perform the dynamic or static stretch from 20 to 40 sec.

Did You Know

It was previously thought that stiffness around a joint was due to muscular tightness. However we now know that a lack of flexibility is due to connective tissue tightness. Connective tissue is composed of mostly non-elastic collagen fibres with some elastic fibres as well. Examples of connective tissues are ligaments, tendons, cartilage and muscular fascia. The connective tissue will respond to various types of stretching.

Two Types of Stretching

Dynamic Stretching

- Use increasingly dynamic movements through the full range of motion of a joint.
- warms up the joints and reduces muscle tension.
- dynamic stretch begins at a slow pace and gradually increases in speed and intensity.
- The dynamic movements must always be done under control (no ballistic type movements- high speed uncontrolled bouncing movements).
- Dynamic stretching is best done at the beginning of exercising but only after a complete warm-up.

Static Stretching

- Slow, gradual and controlled elongation of the muscle.
- The muscle is stretched to the point of mild tension and held for 10-30 seconds.
- This type of stretching is best done at the end of a workout. .
- Its best used in complement to the dynamic method of stretching.

Dynamic Stretches

Key—Moving any joint through its full range of motion on a repetitive basis is Dynamic Stretching. The key is to begin slowly and gradually increase the size and speed of the motion



Leg Swing- to loosen up the hips and hamstrings. This movement can be front to back and across the body



Trunk Rotations- to loosen up the lower back and core.



Shoulder swings- to loosen the shoulder, chest and upper back.



Shoulder Rotations- to loosen the shoulder (rotator cuff) muscles, deltoid and chest muscles.



Toe Touches — to loosen the lower back and hamstring muscles.

Static Stretches

Key—Slow gradual elongation of the muscles stretch. At point of resistance hold for 10 to 30 sec. It is important to breath normally (Don't hold your breath)



Standing Calf Stretch- keep the back knee straight and lean into the wall.



Achilles Stretch -if you bend the back knee you will stretch the Achilles tendon.



Quad Stretch- use a chair or wall for balance. Stand upright and try to bring heel of foot to buttocks. (Be careful of your back as you reach back to grab your foot).



Buttocks stretch- Bring knee to same side of chest and hold and then bring knee to opposite side of chest to stretch the different muscles of the buttocks.



Lower back and buttocks stretch- any movement/stretch that requires twisting must be done carefully. As you are twisted in one direction you push with your knee with your elbow in the opposite direction.

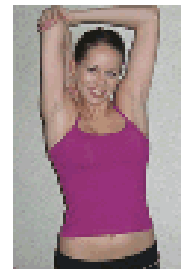
Groin Stretch—Bring feet closer to your body as knees flare out.



Chest Stretch



Shoulder Stretch



Tricep/ Lats Stretch