



## Stretching for Injury Prevention

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It's that time of year again! Summer sports are getting all the weekend warriors out to play again. Joggers come out. Gardeners are pulling out their gardening tools. And everyone is pulling muscles that haven't seen action since the grass was green last fall.

We see a lot of injuries when the weather gets nice. People come in with low back pain, shoulder injuries, pulled hamstrings, plantar faciitis (heel or foot pain), and Achilles tendonitis. One of the most overlooked things to do to prevent injuries is stretching.

### Warm-up:

It takes only 10-15 minutes to do a warm up and stretches. It can be incorporated into your routine by doing a 5-10 minute warm up before the game. This could be as easy as riding your bike to softball practice. Before gardening, take the dog for a short walk. By the time a person has moved briskly 5-10 minutes, muscles are warm with blood flow and ready to stretch.

### Stretch:

Hold stretches steady for at least 30 seconds: don't bounce!

- \***Hamstrings (back of the upper thigh):** Put your leg on a step or stool and bend forward, keeping your back straight.
- \***Quadriceps (front of the upper thigh):** Stand with your heel pulled gently behind you toward your buttocks. Hold a wall or fence with the other hand for support if needed.
- \***Calf Muscles:** Stand by a wall if needed and put one leg forward and one leg behind. Both feet are pointing straight ahead. The front leg is bent and buttocks are tucked in. The other leg is behind as far as tolerated. Hold this for 30 seconds. Then switch legs. This also stretches the hip flexors. To stretch the other muscles in this area, you still stand in the scissor stance, but the front leg is straight and the back leg is bent. Hold this for 30 seconds each side also.
- \***Low Back:** Lie on your back and bend your knees with feet flat on the ground. Rotate both legs off to one side, while keeping shoulders and upper back flat on the ground.
- \***Chest:** Stand and grasp both hands behind while raising them together as high as tolerated. Hold for 30 seconds.
- \***Shoulders:** Stand facing against a wall or tree. Take a straight arm at shoulder level across your chest, pressing gently and firmly on the wall or tree. Hold for 30 seconds each arm. This should be felt at the back of the shoulder
- \***Neck:** Bring your ear to the shoulder on that side. Hold for 30 seconds each side. Look down for 30 seconds. Look up for 30 seconds.

This is a very generalized stretching program. Stretching programs can be modified according to a person's individual needs. The most important thing with any exercise or stretching program is to be consistent. Do these at least 3-4 times per week to see results.