



Warm Up & Stretch Before Physical Activity

A warm-up helps your body prepare itself for exercise both mentally and physically, and reduces the chance of injury. During a warm-up, any injury or illness you have can often be recognized, and further injury prevented. Other benefits of a proper warm up include:

- Increased movement of blood through your tissues, making the muscles more pliable;
- Increased delivery of oxygen and nutrients to your muscles by increasing the blood flow (which prevents you from getting out of breath early or too easily);
- Prepares your muscles for stretching (which should follow a good warm up);
- Prepares your heart for an increase in activity, preventing a rapid increase in blood pressure;
- Prepares you mentally for the upcoming exercise;
- Primes your nerve-to-muscle pathways to be ready for exercise; and,
- Improves coordination and reaction times.

Stretch

Stretches are included after you have warmed up your body to:

- Increase flexibility;
- To reduce muscle tension; and,
- To reduce the risk of muscle or tendon injuries.

There are Eight Rules for Safe Stretching

1. Warm up before stretching;
2. Stretch before and after physical activity;
3. Stretch alternate muscle groups;
4. Stretch slowly and gently, *never bounce or stretch rapidly*;
5. Stretch should be held for approximately 15–20 seconds;
6. Stretch to the point of tension never pain;
7. Do not hold your breath when stretching; breathing should be slow and easy;
8. Stretch all major muscle groups and make sure you perform each stretch on both limbs.

