

Running Stretches

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Note: If you have had any recent surgery, muscle or joint problem, please consult your personal health care professional before starting a stretching or exercise program.

How to Stretch:

Stretching should be done slowly without bouncing. Stretch to where you feel a slight, easy stretch. Hold this feeling for 5-20 seconds. As you hold this stretch, the feeling of tension should diminish. If it doesn't, just ease off slightly into a more comfortable stretch. The easy stretch reduces tension and readies the tissues for the developmental stretch.

After holding the easy stretch move a fraction of an inch farther into the stretch until you feel mild tension again. This is the developmental stretch which should be held for 5-20 seconds. This feeling of stretch tension should also slightly diminish or stay the same. If the tension increases

or becomes painful, you are overstretching. Ease off a bit to a comfortable stretch. The developmental stretch reduces tension and will safely increase flexibility.

Hold only stretch tensions that feel good to you. The key to stretching is to be relaxed while you concentrate on the area being stretched. Your breathing should be slow, deep and rhythmical. Don't worry about how far you can stretch. Stretch relaxed and limberness will become just one of the many by-products of regular stretching.

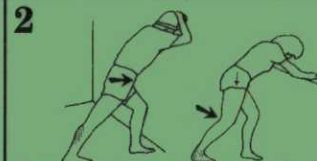
Do a light warm-up of walking or jogging for several minutes prior to stretching.

The dotted areas are those areas of the body where you will most likely feel the stretch.

Before:



Place both hands shoulder width apart on a fence or ledge and let your upper body drop down as you keep your knees slightly bent (1 inch). Your hips should be directly above your feet. To change the area of the stretch, bend your knees just a bit more and/or place your hands at different heights. Find a stretch that you can hold for at least 30 seconds. (Remember to always bend your knees when coming out of this stretch.)



To stretch your calf, stand a little ways from a solid support and lean on it with your forearms, your head resting on your hands. Bend one leg and place your foot on the ground in front of you leaving the other leg straight, behind you. Slowly move your hips forward until you feel a stretch in the calf of your straight leg. Be sure to keep the heel of the foot of the straight leg on the ground and your toes pointed straight ahead. Hold an easy stretch for 15 seconds. Do not bounce. Stretch both legs.

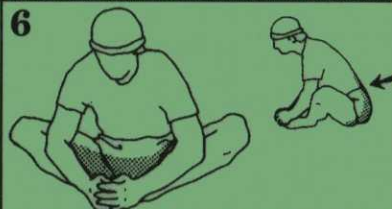
To stretch the soleus and Achilles tendon area, slightly bend the back knee, keeping the foot flat. This gives you a much lower stretch which is also good for maintaining or regaining ankle flexibility. 10 seconds, each leg. This area needs only a slight feeling of stretch. Stretch both legs.



With your feet shoulder width apart and pointed out to about a 15° angle, heels on the ground, bend your knees and squat down. If you have trouble staying in this position hold onto something for support. It is a great stretch for your ankles, Achilles tendon areas, groin, lower back and hips. Hold stretch for 20-30 seconds. Be careful if you have had any knee problems. If pain is present discontinue this stretch.



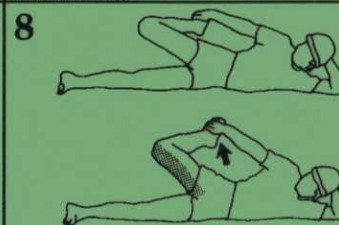
Rotate your ankle clockwise and counter-clockwise through a complete range of motion with slight resistance provided by your hand. Rotary motion of the ankle helps to gently stretch out tight ligaments. Repeat 10-20 times in each direction. Do both ankles.



Put the soles of your feet together with your heels a comfortable distance from your groin. With your hands around your feet slowly contract your abdominals to assist you in flexing forward until you feel an easy stretch in the groin. Make your movement forward by bending from the hips and not from the shoulders. If possible, keep your elbows on the outside of your lower legs for greater stability during the stretch. Hold a comfortable stretch for 20-30 seconds. Exhale as you go forward. Breathe rhythmically during the stretch.



With your right foot resting to the outside of your left knee, pull your knee across your body toward your opposite shoulder until an easy stretch is felt on the side of the hip. Hold for 15 seconds.

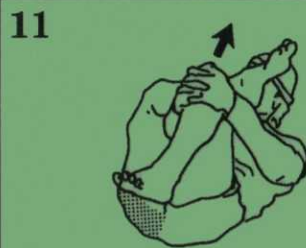


Lie on your left side and rest the side of your head in the palm of your left hand. Hold the top of your right foot with your right hand between the toes and ankle joint.

Now move the front of your right hip forward by contracting the right butt (gluteus) muscles as you push your right foot into your right hand. This should stretch the front of your thigh. Hold an easy stretch for 10 seconds. Keep your body in a straight line.



Sit up and straighten your right leg, the sole of your left foot resting next to the inside of your straightened leg. Lean slightly forward from the hips and stretch the hamstrings of your right leg. Find an easy stretch and relax. If you can't touch your toes comfortably, use a towel to help you stretch. Hold for 20 seconds. Do not lock your knee. Your right quadriceps should be soft and relaxed during the stretch. Keep your right foot upright with the ankle and toes relaxed. Exhale as you go forward. Breathe easily.



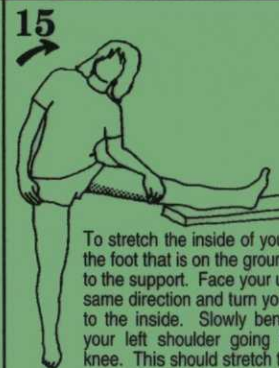
Lie on your back. Bend your right knee and put the outside of your right lower leg just above your opposite knee. With your hands just below your left knee, gently pull your leg toward your chest until a stretch is felt in your right buttocks area (piriformis). Hold for 15-20 seconds. Lift the back of your head off the ground and look straight ahead as you stretch. Breathe slowly and deeply. Repeat for other side.



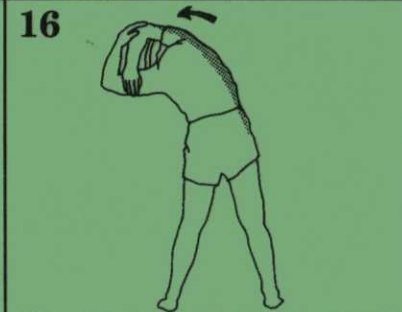
From a bent knee position interlace your fingers behind your head with your head resting in your hands. Lift the left leg over the right leg and from here, use your left leg to pull your right leg toward the floor until you feel a good stretch. Stretch and relax. Keep the upper back, shoulders and elbows flat on the floor with your head resting in your hands. The idea is not to touch the floor with your right knee, but to stretch within your limits. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Breathe easily. Repeat stretch for other side.



Place the ball of your foot up on a secure support of some kind (wall, fence, table). Keep the down leg pointed straight ahead. Now, bend the knee of the up leg as you move your hips forward. This should stretch your groin, hamstrings and front of hip. Hold for 20 seconds. This stretch will make it easier to lift your knees. If possible, for balance and control, use your hands to hold onto the support. Do both legs.


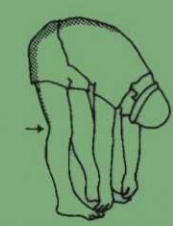




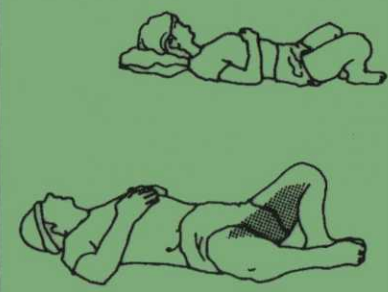
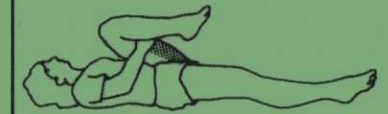


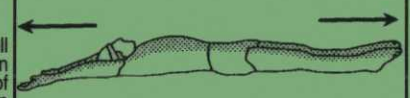
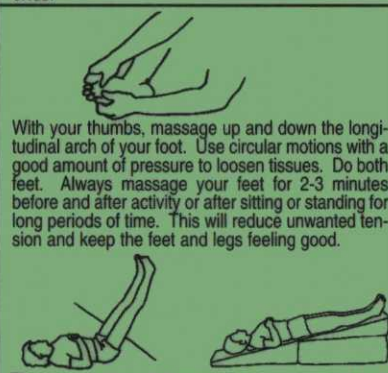



To stretch the inside of your raised leg turn the foot that is on the ground so it is parallel to the support. Face your upper body in the same direction and turn your left hip slightly to the inside. Slowly bend sideways with your left shoulder going toward your left knee. This should stretch the inside of your upper leg. Hold an easy stretch for 15 seconds. Be sure to keep the knee of the down leg slightly bent. Do both legs. Hold only tensions that feel good to you.



With arms overhead, hold the elbow of one arm with the hand of the other arm. Keeping knees slightly bent (one inch), gently pull your elbow behind your head as you bend from your hips to the side. Hold an easy stretch for 10 seconds. Do both sides. Keeping your knees slightly bent will give you better balance.

After:

<p>1</p>  <p>Stand in this bent-knee position. This position contracts the quadriceps and relaxes the hamstrings. Hold for 30 seconds. Because these muscles have opposing actions, tightening the quadriceps will relax the hamstrings. As you hold this bent-knee position, feel the difference between the front of the thigh and the back of the thigh. The quadriceps should feel hard and tight while the hamstrings should feel soft and relaxed.</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>After holding the bent-knee position, stand up and then slowly bend forward from the hips. Always keep knees slightly bent during this stretch (1 inch) so lower back is not stressed. Let your neck, arms and hands relax. Go to the point where you feel a slight stretch in the back of your legs. Stretch in this easy phase for 15-25 seconds until you are relaxed. Let yourself relax physically by mentally concentrating on the area being stretched. Do not stretch with knees locked or bounce when you stretch. Stretch by how you feel and not by how far you can go. Always bend your knees when returning to a standing position.</p>	<p>3 Repeat stretch 4 'Before' 4</p>  <p>Stand on one foot with your knee slightly flexed and place the outside of the opposite lower leg just above your knee. Put one hand on the inside of your ankle and the other on your thigh. Now bend your knee a little more as you move your chest forward over the bent leg. This will test your balance. Hold a mild stretch for 10 seconds. Repeat for other leg. This stretches the outside of the hip (piriformis area). Do not hold your breath.</p>	<p>5</p>  <p>As in the drawing above, bring the toes of one foot almost even with the knee of the other leg. Let the heel of the bent leg come off the ground 1/2 inch or so. Lower your heel toward the ground while leaning forward on your thigh (just above the knee) with your chest and shoulder. The idea is to use the forward pressure from your shoulder on your thigh to gently stretch the Achilles tendon area. The Achilles tendon area needs only a very slight stretch. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Do both sides.</p>	<p>6</p>  <p>As in the drawing above, move one leg forward until the knee of the forward leg is directly over the ankle. Your other knee should be resting on the ground. Lower the front of your hip downward until an easy stretch is felt in front of the hip and possibly in your hamstrings and groin. Do this without changing the position of the knee on the ground or the forward foot. Hold the stretch for 15-20 seconds. Repeat for other leg.</p>
<p>7</p>  <p>Shoulder Shrug: Raise the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel slight tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold this feeling of tension for 3-5 seconds, then relax your shoulders downward into their normal position. Do this 2-3 times. Good to use at the first signs of tightness or tension in the shoulder and neck area.</p>	<p>9</p>  <p>The next stretch is done with your fingers interlaced behind your back. Slowly turn your elbows inward while straightening your arms. This stretch can be done at any time. Hold for 5-15 seconds. Do twice.</p>	<p>10 Repeat stretch 2 'Before' 11</p>  <p>Gently pull your <i>left</i> foot (from the inside of foot) toward buttocks with your <i>right</i> hand until you feel a mild stretch. If necessary, place your other hand on a support for balance. Hold for 15 seconds. Stretch other leg. Breathe rhythmically. This stretch can also be done using same hand to same foot, if preferred.</p>	<p>12</p>  <p>Relax with your knees bent and the soles of your feet together. (Lie with a pillow under your head if you'd like.) This comfortable position will stretch your groin. Hold this stretch for 50 seconds.</p>	<p>13</p>  <p>Next, straighten both legs and relax, then pull your left leg toward your chest. For this stretch keep the back of your head on the floor, if possible, but don't strain. Hold an easy stretch for 30 seconds. Repeat, pulling your right leg toward your chest.</p>
<p>14</p>  <p>Lie on your back and lift your leg up toward a 90° angle at the thigh joint. Keep low back flat against the ground. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Repeat for other leg. If necessary, hold onto the back of your leg to create the stretch, as shown above. Or put a towel around the bottom of your foot and pull gently. You can also place a pillow under your head for comfort. Do not overstretch.</p>	<p>15</p>  <p>Bend your leg and, with your opposite hand, pull that bent leg up and over your other leg as shown above. Turn your head to look toward the hand of the arm that is straight (head should be resting on the floor). Make sure the back of your shoulders are kept flat on the floor. Now, using your hand on your thigh (resting just above the knee), pull your bent leg down toward the floor until you get the right stretch feeling in your lower back and side of hip. Keep feet and ankles relaxed. Hold a comfortable stretch for 15-20 seconds, each side.</p>	<p>16</p>  <p>Straighten out your arms and legs. Point your fingers and toes as you stretch as far as you can. Stretch and then relax. This is a good stretch for the entire body. Hold for 5 seconds.</p>	<p>17</p>  <p>With your thumbs, massage up and down the longitudinal arch of your foot. Use circular motions with a good amount of pressure to loosen tissues. Do both feet. Always massage your feet for 2-3 minutes before and after activity or after sitting or standing for long periods of time. This will reduce unwanted tension and keep the feet and legs feeling good.</p>	<p>For a free catalog of additional books, posters, videos, DVD, body tools, Maxit® athleticwear, and more, contact:</p> <p>Stretching Inc. P.O.Box 767 Palmer Lake CO 80133-0767 1-800-333-1307 fax (719)481-9058 email-office@stretching.com website-www.stretching.com</p>  <p>Bob and Jean Anderson, creators of this stretching chart are also the authors of the book, STRETCHING. Now a revised ©2010 edition; available spiral bound.</p>