

STRETCHING It Out!

I do feel a bit like I'm trying to teach my Gran how to suck eggs writing this, however I do think its worth the time and effort.

One thing that has come to light whilst watching you scurry off into the pub at the end of a pack run, is a lack of adequate stretching. So, what I'm hoping to achieve by the end of this, to have either bored you to sleep (rest is good) or make you reconsider skipping your next stretching session.

I'll start with the basics first, this is not meant as an insult to your intelligence, but to maybe fill in the gaps of information you didn't know.

Why bother stretching? When you go out on your run, cycle, swim or what ever your chosen sport, your muscles are going to have a hard time. I'll stick with running for this article, seeing this is for primarily a dinking club (oops sorry!) a running club. Firstly, you're not going to bother warming up, instead you'll point yourself at the first and nearest hill and go shooting off. You'll run for a while and feel the normal twinges, before settling into your stride. You then get home or to the pub and think "Bugger stretching I need a shower or a pint!" Now all the twinges you felt were either old injuries reminding you of their presence or new micro-tears forming, from the constant flexing and contracting of working muscles (especially of cold and tight ones). I could now start quoting lines and paragraphs from any one of the books I have on sports therapy, but instead I will put it into my own, perhaps not eloquent, but probably just as pertinent, words. Ok, muscles that undergo regular post-exercise stretching are more flexible, recover quicker and with the correct amount of time spent on stretching the muscle, range of motion can be increased.

What is the correct way of stretching? All of you should be doing static stretches; the stretch position is assumed slowly and held for 30 to 60 seconds and repeated 3 to 6 times. You should only feel a slow build-up of tension and as time passes the tension may begin to ease, at which point you can increase the stretch a little further. One tip so that you don't forget any muscles, is to start at your feet and stretch each muscle individually working your way up your body (i.e. calves, then hamstrings, quads, gluts, back, shoulders and arms). This is called static stretching and is viewed as the most effective of all the stretching methods. Now for members who do the bobbing thing, this is called ballistic stretching, often favoured by your old sports teacher and by footballers. As runners you should reconsider this technique, as it's ineffective and it can increase your risk of injury.

So still wondering why should you bother, well next time you're out running and you feel that ping of pain, think of where it may end. A sore leg tomorrow, your absence from a race. If you have the time to run you have the time to stretch.

If your still not entirely sure what you should be doing, give me a ring or grab me (metaphorically speaking) for a chat at the next pack run. Take care and HAPPY STRETCHING!!!

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