

## Stretching Before Exercises Reduces Risk of Injury – Fact or Fable?

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The boring stretching routines before getting into playing the sport, or doing the workout is certainly something that a lot of people, myself included have always loathed. So the question is – does stretching before exercise really help?

According to a study published in the Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine it doesn't. Well thank goodness right?

But wait...there must have been a reason why we did all those stretches right? The thinking was that it would somehow prevent or decrease the chance of injury, but apparently that thinking wasn't really supported by scientific evidence.

Truthfully the only time a pre-exercise stretching routine showed any benefit was when it was in conjunction with a warm-up before the actual stretching.

### 5 reasons why stretching before exercise does not prevent injuries.

1. Soft tissue injury is more likely to occur through immobilization.
2. Exercises where extended muscle lengths are not required such as jogging would see no actual benefit from stretching before exercise.
3. Most muscle strains are believed to occur during the eccentric motion of an exercise (the negative repetition), and stretching does not work to benefit this portion of the movement.
4. Stretching can cause damage at the cytoskeleton level. The cytoskeleton is a dynamic structure, which maintains cell shape, often protects cells, enables cellular motion, and plays important roles in both intracellular transport and cellular division.
5. Stretching appears to hide muscle pain in humans.

### What should I do to warm-up?

Warm-up techniques are mainly used to increase body core, and muscular temperature and are grouped into 3 categories:

#### 1. Passive

Passive warm-ups cause an increase in temperature by outside means. Examples of this are heating pads, liniments, saunas, etc.

#### 2. General

The general warm-up increases temperature by generalized or non-specific body movements. Jumping Jacks are a good example of this type of warm-up.

#### 3. Specific

The specific warm-up causes an increase in temperature using the actual body parts that will be used in the intended exercise. A good example of this is when body builders do a warm-up set with just the weight of the bar before adding any plates.

The specific warm-up technique seems to be the most effective of the three.

It is recommended that you do at least 1 or 2 warm-up sets for each body part you are about to train, even if you core and muscle temperature are already increased the physical and mental rehearsal this type of stretching promotes is beneficial on many levels.

## **The Stretching Activities**

As with the warm-up, there are three categories of stretching:

### **1. Ballistic Stretching**

Ballistic stretching makes use of repetitive bouncing movements. This type of stretching can be dangerous and should be avoided as it can cause muscles overload.

### **Static Stretching**

Probably the most common form of stretching, static stretches force the muscle to a certain point (ideally only so far as slight discomfort) and the position is held for an extended duration.

### **Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF)**

This form of stretching is perhaps the most under used type of stretching routine. PNF uses alternating contractions and stretching of the muscles.

These are by no means the only types of stretches out there, but they are the main ones. You should always use a stretching routine that suits you and your training best.

### **The Final Word**

With the weight of scientific study behind it, the conclusion that pre-exercise stretching with out an accompanying warm-up is not effective for preventing or reducing the risk of injury in exercise.

Most fitness professionals will agree that the pre-workout warm-up is far more valuable.

[http://www.fitness.com/articles/936/stretching\\_before\\_exercises\\_reduces\\_risk\\_of\\_injury\\_fact\\_or\\_fable.php](http://www.fitness.com/articles/936/stretching_before_exercises_reduces_risk_of_injury_fact_or_fable.php)