

# Stretching for better health

## Your muscles were made

**to be stretched.** And loosening them up before doing things like running or playing tennis can help prevent injury, soreness and cramping. Stretching can also make it easier—and painless—to do daily tasks that involve reaching or bending over.

## Let's get started

Here's one way to stretch correctly before your main exercise. After a 5- or 10-minute warmup of walking, biking, or some other light activity:

- Stretch the muscles you will be using in your main exercise for 5 to 10 minutes
- Try to hold each stretch for at least 15 to 30 seconds
- Ease yourself into the stretch; relax, and don't push or bounce
- Breathe normally as you do the stretch
- Try closing your eyes while stretching. It helps you relax and focus
- Do your exercise program

After your exercise, cool down by taking another 5 to 10 minutes to stretch. This will also improve your overall flexibility and reduce soreness.



“Adding stretching to your daily life can be just as important to your health as regular exercise”

## You can stretch anytime

Stretching isn't just for a warm-up or cool-down exercise. It can be done anytime. First thing in the morning, during your coffee break, or in the office for a few minutes. You can also try things that include stretching, such as dance, martial arts, tai chi, or yoga.

See other side for examples of easy stretches you can do.

# How to stretch and be healthy!

## QUADRICEPS STRETCH



1. Lie on your side with one hand supporting your head.
2. Stretch your leg back by pulling your foot toward your buttock. You will feel the stretch in the front of your thigh. If this causes stress on your knees, do not do this stretch.
3. Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds.
4. Repeat 2 to 4 times for each leg.

## CALF STRETCH

1. Place your hands on a wall for balance. You can also do this with your hands on the back of a chair, a countertop, or a tree.
2. Step back with your left leg. Keep the leg straight, and press your left heel into the floor.
3. Press your hips forward, bending your right leg slightly. You will feel the stretch in your left calf.
4. Hold the stretch 15 to 30 seconds.
5. Repeat 2 to 4 times for each leg.



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This information is general in nature. It is not meant to replace the advice or care you get from your doctor or other health care professionals. If you have specific health care needs or would like more complete health information, please see your doctor or other health care provider.

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