

Stretching 101

What Is Dynamic Stretching?

Dynamic stretching involves active, controlled movements that take your joints and muscles through their full range of motion. These stretches mimic the movements of your sport or activity, effectively preparing your body for action.

When to Use Dynamic Stretching

Dynamic stretching is your go-to warm-up tool. It increases blood flow, improves coordination, and activates your muscles—all of which are critical for peak performance and injury prevention.

What Is Static Stretching?

Static stretching is holding a stretch in a specific position for a period, usually 15-60 seconds. The goal is to lengthen a specific muscle or muscle group, improving flexibility and range of motion over time.

When to Use Static Stretching

Static stretching is best after a workout as part of a cool-down routine. By relaxing the muscles and holding a stretch, you can help reduce post-exercise stiffness and improve long-term flexibility.

***Static stretching BEFORE exercise can reduce performance. Studies show that prolonged static stretches may temporarily decrease muscle strength and power.

Benefits of Static and Dynamic Stretching

Using both static and dynamic stretching can:

- **Enhance Performance:** Dynamic stretching increases muscle activation and coordination.
- **Prevent Injuries:** Stretching improves flexibility, reducing the risk of strains and pulls.
- **Promote Recovery:** Static stretches post-workout help release muscle tension.
- **Boost Range of Motion:** Greater flexibility allows for deeper squats, longer strides, and better overall movement.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Skipping a Warm-Up Before Stretching: Jumping straight into stretching when your muscles are cold can lead to strains. Start with light cardio, like jogging or cycling, to get the blood flowing.

- **Overstretching:** Pushing too hard can cause injury. Stretch to the point of mild tension, not pain.
- **Rushing:** Stretching is not a race. Take your time to fully experience the benefits.
- **One-Size-Fits-All Approach:** Your body is unique. A stretch that feels amazing for your friend might not work for you. Listen to your body.