

Recommended Stretches

Why is it important to stretch?

Stretching is an essential part of any exercise regime. Not only should you stretch and warm up your muscles before you start your training session; whether that's weights, circuit training, cardio, classes or resistance but you should make stretching an integral part of your cool down at the end.

Stretching helps to return your muscles to their correct length after working them, it can improve your flexibility, stability and it removes lactic acid from your muscles that builds up during exercise. It can also help to prevent blood pooling. So? You may ask, well lactic acid build up and blood pooling and not helping your muscles go back to their correct length can all cause soreness and possibly injury. That is why stretching is so important.

Stretching is safe to do every day and can even be a short workout on its own if you don't have time to devote to a properly intensive 30-60 minute workout. **So let's get cracking...**

Standing Stretches

For those of you that have taken part in my sessions you'll know that most of the stretches we do at the end are standing up. Standing stretches should be done with knees slightly off-lock, relaxed and core partly tensed, back straight and head facing straight forward (unless otherwise stated).



Standing Calf Stretch

Take a big step forward and bend your front knee, keeping your back leg straight. Keep your back straight and core slightly tensed.

You should feel the stretch in your back leg in the calf muscle.

Hold for 10-15 seconds. Repeat on the other leg.



Standing Hamstring Stretch

Take a small step forward (the gap between your feet should be about the size of your own foot). Bend your back leg and straighten your front leg. Rest your arms on your bent leg, arch your back and raise your chest. You should feel the stretch down the back of your straight leg. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Repeat on the other leg. This can also be done lying down; raise one leg off the ground keeping the other leg straight and flat on the floor. Grasp your raised leg under the knee and pull it into your chest. In this position try to straighten the leg and relax your upper body. Hold for

10-15 seconds and then repeat on the other leg.



Standing Quad Stretch

Stand on one leg and bend the other one at the knee, grabbing your foot across where the laces are pull your foot towards your bottom until you feel the stretch down the front of your thigh. Hold for 10-15 seconds, repeat on the other leg.

If you feel a bit wobbly then hold onto a chair, friend or wall!

This can also be done lying down. Simply lie face down with your head resting on your forearm and using your other hand pull your heel towards your bottom.

Again hold for 10-15 seconds and repeat on the other leg.



Standing Hip Flexor Stretch

Take a big step forward, really big.

Bend your front knee and your back knee, raising the back heel off the floor.

Keep your back straight make sure you bend quite deeply so that you feel the stretch along your hip and the side of your leg.

Hold for 10-15 seconds and repeat on the other leg.



Standing Chest Stretch

Clasp your hands behind your back with your palms facing upwards.

Pull your palms upwards as if you are holding a weight and drawing it up your back.

Squeeze your shoulder blades together and stick your chest out.

You should feel the stretch across your chest.

Hold the stretch for 10-15 seconds.

You can also do this stretch sitting down (with a straight back).



Standing Lat Stretch

Place one hand over the other with both palms facing down.

Push your arms up over your head until your elbows are just off lock.

Imagine you are holding up a heavy weight and you should feel the stretch in your back.

You should be able to see into your palms while keeping your head facing straight forward.

Hold the stretch for 10-15 seconds. You can also do this stretch sitting down (with a straight back).



Standing Upper Back Stretch

Place one hand over the other with both palms facing towards your chest.

Push your arms forward until your elbows are just off lock.

Round your upper back and put your chin down on your chest.

You should feel the stretch across your upper back.

Hold for 10-15 seconds. You can also do this stretch sitting down.



Standing Tricep Stretch

Raise one arm straight up and bend the elbow so your hand is touching your back just below your neck.

With your other hand push on your arm muscle, below the elbow joint, until you feel the stretch in the back of your arm.

Imagine you are trying to reach a zip running up your back.

Hold for 10-15 seconds and then repeat with the other arm. You can also do this stretch sitting down (with a straight back).



Standing Deltoid Stretch

Reach one arm out straight in front of you and then move it across your body, with your other hand gently apply pressure to the arm muscle, above the elbow joint, until you feel the stretch in the shoulder.

Hold for 10-15 seconds and then repeat on the other arm.

You can also do this stretch sitting down (with a straight back).



Lying Lower back Stretch

Lie on your back on the floor (or a mat) and bring both your knees up to your chest. Wrap your arms around your knees and pull both legs towards your chest – giving yourself a big hug. Keep your back flat on the floor with your head and neck also resting, relaxed, on the floor. Hold for

10-15 seconds.



Lying Glute Stretch

Lie on your back with both knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Raise one foot, bend the leg and place the ankle on your other knee. With both hands reach forward and grab the thigh of the leg with the foot still on the floor. You should be able to clasp your hands underneath the knee joint on the thigh. Pull the thigh towards your chest, relax your upper body so that your back, head and neck are resting on the floor. You should feel the stretch in your bottom of the bent leg. Hold for 10-15 seconds and repeat on the other leg.



Sitting Inner thigh stretch

Sit on the floor with both knees bent and feet together, with the soles of the feet facing each other. Press down on your knees, keeping your back straight and your pelvis pushed slightly forward until you feel a stretch in your inner thigh.

Make sure you don't lean forward or hunch your shoulders. You may find it easier to grab your feet and open them like opening a book.

Hold the stretch for 10-15 seconds.