

# Topic of the Week

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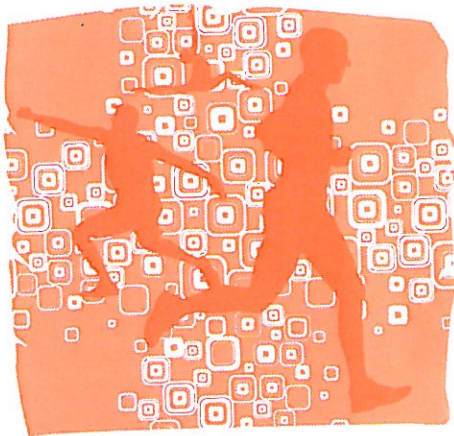
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## The Benefits of Stretching

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For decades we've believed that stretching the body before physical activity was key to increasing flexibility, avoiding injury and improving athletic performance. Unfortunately, we made a lot of assumptions about stretching that were not tested with appropriate scientific scrutiny.

In their article "Myths and Truth about Stretching" that appeared in *The Physician and Sport Medicine*, medical doctors Ian Shrier and Kav Gossal admit there are numerous misconceptions and conflicting information about stretching. The two physicians reviewed over 60 studies related to issues involving stretching and acknowledged the contradictions. But they concluded that "stretching may provide substantial benefits if used under appropriate conditions."<sup>1</sup>



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Your chiropractor is a great source for advice on stretching. Before making recommendations, a chiropractor takes into account a patient's physical condition and health history. Regular stretching can help sustain correct body alignment and posture. It extends the flexibility and range of motion of your joints. When your joints can't maintain their full range of motion, you tire more easily. This makes it more difficult to complete daily tasks you normally take for granted. Stretching keeps your body better coordinated. This can be especially helpful to seniors, who are more susceptible to falling. Stretching also helps relax stressed muscles. Keeping your joints and muscles loose allows for better blood circulation so every part of your body gets sufficient oxygen and nutrients.

The following information gives you an overview of stretching as it relates to a general fitness plan.



### Exercise of the Week

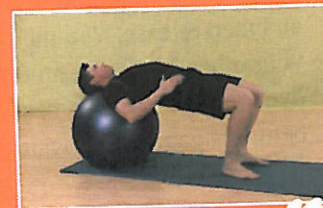
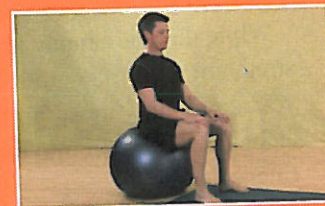
#### Walk Out to Table Top Reverse Bridge

(Consult your chiropractor before engaging in this or any other exercise.)

Difficulty: Medium

Sit on ball, legs parallel, feet on the floor. Keeping feet in line, slowly walk out to a table top position. Hold for 1-2 counts, then walk back to a sitting position. Back should be rounded while making transition move.

Repeat 5-10 times.



## Never Skip the "Warm-Up"

It's essential that you do an adequate warm-up before stretching. This helps awaken the muscles and prevent strains. What qualifies as suitable warm-up activities? Try a brisk five-minute walk or a mild jog to send more blood to the muscles. The goal is to engage in a light intensity activity that warms your muscles sufficiently to be prepared for stretching, but not so intense as to cause strains or injuries.



## Types of Stretching

While there are many kinds of stretching (too many to list here), you're probably most familiar with techniques that fall into the following categories ...

### Dynamic stretching

This involves moving your body while engaging in stretching techniques. An example would be walking while swinging a leg up to your mid section, hold it for a second, and then release. You then repeat with your other leg. Some studies indicate dynamic stretching is best conducted before engaging in physical activity.<sup>2-3</sup>



### Static stretching

The goal is to stretch the muscle (or group of muscles) to its farthest point without causing pain. You generally hold a static stretch for 30 seconds. If the area is particularly stiff, you can extend it for up to 60 seconds. Research suggests static stretching is best done after physical activity.<sup>2-3</sup>

### Ballistic stretching

These are bouncing stretches. The research about the benefits of ballistic stretching has been mixed. Some experts believe it can put you at risk of pulling muscles more easily than other types of stretching

Although not as familiar to the public as the other categories mentioned, proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation is an effective but an advanced system that's used by many professional athletes. PNF involves contracting specific muscle groups using resistance. And it seems to activate muscles more quickly than other types of stretching.<sup>4</sup> Due to its advanced techniques, PNF is best done first with a health professional who has expertise in this area.

## Quote of the Week

"Where there is laughter there is always more health than sickness."

- Phyllis Bottome

For more health tips, visit online  
[www.citruspie.com](http://www.citruspie.com)



## References and Sources:

- [1] *The Myths and Truths of Stretching: Individualized Recommendations for Healthy Muscles*, Ian Shrier MD, PhD and Kav Gossal MD. *The Physician and Sports Medicine*, Vol 28, #8, August 2000.
- [2] Dynamic vs. Passive stretching - *Medicine & Science in Sport and Exercise* 33(3), pp354-358
- [3] *Dynamic vs. Passive stretching* - *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, vol 15 (1): 98-101
- [4] *Effects of stretching exercises on the vastus medialis and vastus lateralis* - Hasegawa, K. T., Hori, S., Tsujita, J., & Dawson, M. L. (2001). *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 33(5), Supplement abstract 51.



## Topic of the Week

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