

Getting Started:

A flexible way to get fit.....

Proper daily stretching is one of the best ways to keep your body loose, limber and ready for an active life. Best of all, stretching is an activity that is easy to perform and doesn't require any special equipment. You can stretch anywhere, anytime. Stretching is a safe and easy way to increase your flexibility and enhance your fitness.

You can add stretching to your daily routine around the house and at work. Whether you like to garden, golf, dance or take a refreshing walk, stretching beforehand will help increase your enjoyment.

The more you prepare your body for activity the more

enjoyable the activity will be — and the less likely you will be to injure yourself. Stretching can be done on your own, with a friend or as part of a fitness group. To make it a part of your day, all you need is:

- a comfortable space preferably with carpet or exercise mat.
- a chair, wall or something for support if needed – a friend will work too!
- a stretching routine.



Health benefits of stretching:

- Helps in preventing muscular aches and pains.
- Improves posture and can reduce neck and lower back discomfort.
- Promotes greater flexibility so you can enjoy more activities with less fear of injury.
- Revitalizes the mind, reduces fatigue and increases energy.
- Stretching relieves stress and tension.

The facts about flexibility.....



Flexibility refers to how far and how easily you can move your joints. As you get older, your tendons and other connective tissues around your muscles begin to shorten and tighten, restricting the movement of your joints — you become less flexible. In many cases this loss of mobility/flexibility is more related to inactivity than the aging process. The less you move, the less you're able to move.

The long and the SHORT of safe stretching

- DO - Try to stretch on a daily basis by taking short activity breaks.
- DO - Follow proper stretching techniques and stretch all the major muscles.
- DO - Stretch the specific muscles required for your sport or activity.
- DO - Wear comfortable clothing.
- DO - Stretch after exercising to prevent your muscles from tightening up.
- DO - Try to add variety to your routine — read a reputable book on stretching or talk to an exercise professional.

- DON'T - Stretch when your muscles are cold.
- DON'T - Stretch until it hurts. If the tension is uncomfortable ease off slightly.
- DON'T - Bounce when stretching.
- DON'T - Hold your breath.

We'll help you get started.

If you are interested in starting weight training, a walking or a swimming program check out the City of Saskatoon's other "Smart Start" brochures or talk to a Professional Fitness and Lifestyle Consultant at a leisure facility near you.



For more information on being physically active
Call (306) 975-7808

Community Services Department
City of Saskatoon
222 -3rd Avenue North,
Saskatoon, Sk. S7K 0J5

Stretch your Limits

A Smart Start Guide
to Stretching for Fitness



Five Steps to a Great Stretch:

1

Warm-up your muscles with 5 minutes of light activity. Think of your muscle and connective tissue as candy taffy — when it is warm it is stretchable and when it is cold it is stiff and brittle.

2

Move slowly into the stretch and stop at the point when you feel a mild tension in the muscle you are stretching.

3

Hold the stretch position a minimum of 10-30 seconds. Repeat two to three times as necessary.

4

As you hold the stretch take at least two easy breaths.

5

Slowly release the stretch and relax the muscle.

Upper & Lower Body Stretches

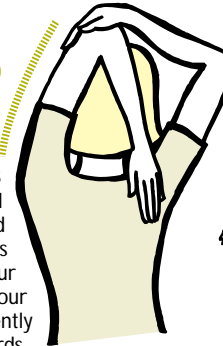


1

SIDE NECK STRETCH
With shoulders relaxed, gently tilt your head towards your shoulder. Assist stretch with a gentle pull on the side of the head.

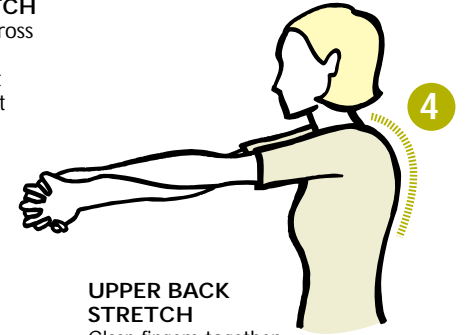
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TRICEPS STRETCH
Reach hand behind head as if to scratch your back. Grasp your elbow and gently push downwards.



SHOULDER STRETCH
Reach your left arm across your body and hold it straight. With the right hand grasp the left elbow and pull it across the body towards the chest.

3



4

UPPER BACK STRETCH
Clasp fingers together with thumbs pointing down, round your shoulders as you reach your hands forward.

3

Hold the stretch position a minimum of 10-30 seconds. Repeat two to three times as necessary.

4

As you hold the stretch take at least two easy breaths.

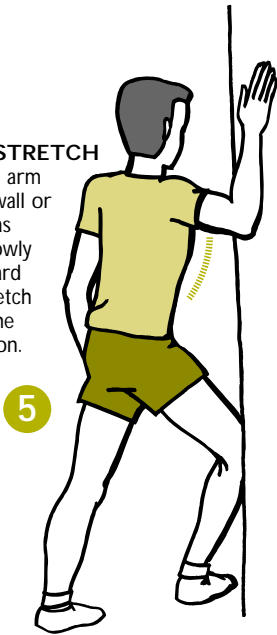
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Slowly release the stretch and relax the muscle.

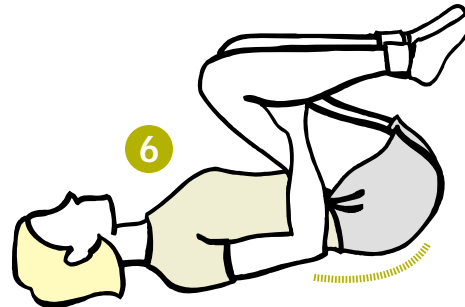
Stretch for your Activity

Walking / Running	# 7-12
Swimming	# 1- 5
Weight training	# 1-12
Golf	# 1- 6
Curling	# 7-12

CHEST STRETCH
Place bent arm against a wall or doorway as shown. Slowly lean forward until a stretch is felt in the chest region.



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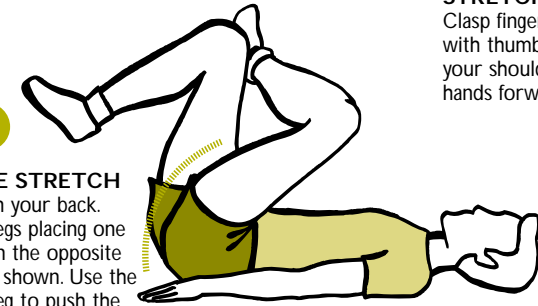


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LOW BACK STRETCH - Lie on your back with knees bent. Slowly pull knees up to the chest until you feel a gentle stretch in the lower back.

7

GLUTE STRETCH
Lying on your back. Cross legs placing one ankle on the opposite knee as shown. Use the flexed leg to push the crossed leg back until you feel a stretch in the buttocks.



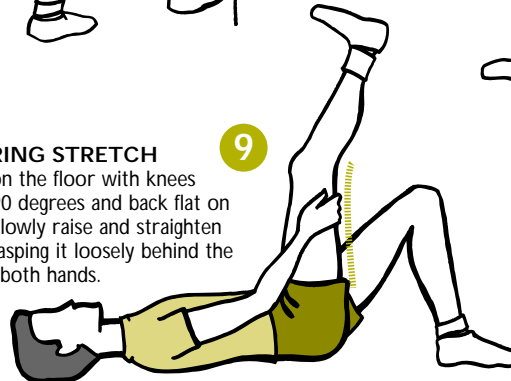
BUTTERFLY STRETCH
Sit tall with the soles of your feet together. Allow your knees to ease down towards the floor until you feel a stretch along the groin region.

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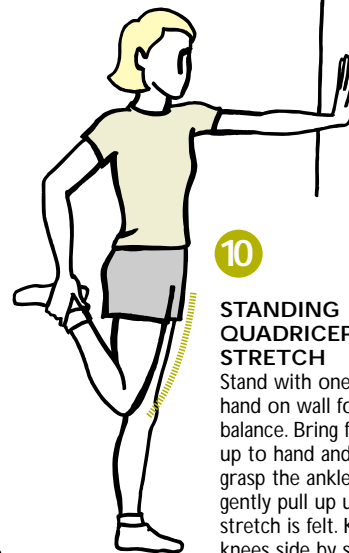
HAMSTRING STRETCH
Lying flat on the floor with knees flexed to 90 degrees and back flat on the floor. Slowly raise and straighten one leg, grasping it loosely behind the thigh with both hands.

9



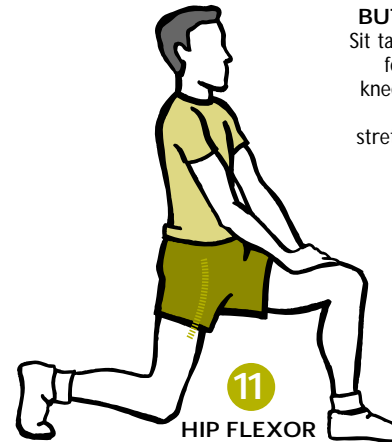
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STANDING QUADRICEPS STRETCH
Stand with one hand on wall for balance. Bring foot up to hand and grasp the ankle, gently pull up until stretch is felt. Keep knees side by side.



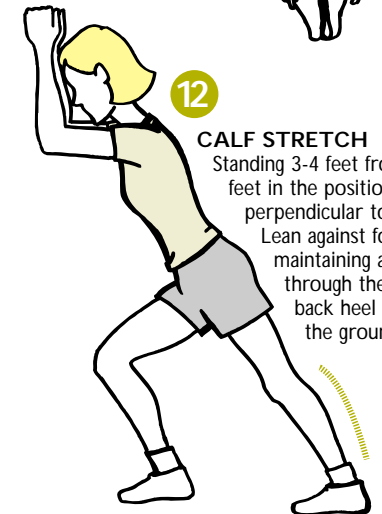
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HIP FLEXOR STRETCH
Kneel on floor with front knee bent at and back leg extended as shown. Keeping back straight slowly bend the lead leg until a stretch is felt. Do not lean forward or bend the lead leg more than 90 degrees.



12

CALF STRETCH
Standing 3-4 feet from wall with feet in the position shown and perpendicular to the wall. Lean against forearms, maintaining a straight line through the spine and back heel pressed to the ground.



A Word of Caution:

- If you have pain other than simple stiffness or an existing medical condition (including pregnancy) it is essential to check with a health professional before attempting these stretches. If you experience pain, instability, tingling or numbness in any part of your body or if you feel dizzy during these exercises you should stop it at once to avoid the possibility of injury.
- If you are unsure about how to get started, talk to a fitness professional.