



Flexibility and Stretching Exercises

Flexibility or stretching exercises should be included into each training session, on game days and always be part of a warm-up or cool-down. Flexibility exercises are encouraged at all ages.

Stretching Rules:

- warm up first (unless it's after a game) with five minutes of moderate cardio activity
- stretch to the point of firmness and try to relax the muscles being stretched
- do not hold your breath - concentrate on slow, regular breathing
- partner stretching should be undertaken with care as younger sports people can become over enthusiastic and cause their partner injury by pushing a joint/muscle complex into extremes.
- there are two main types of stretches: a) **dynamic** and b) **static**

Generally, it is agreed among researchers that:

- **dynamic** stretching should be undertaken **before** training/sport
- **static** stretching is more appropriate **after** training/sport



Dynamic Stretching: utilizes movement to propel the limbs and muscles into an extended range of movement. This is not the time to focus on becoming more flexible but rather maximising current ranges of movement in preparation for the game or training ahead.

- **dynamic** stretching should be part of a supervised warm-up
- target shoulders, neck, thoracic and lumbar spines, hips, hamstrings, inner thighs and calves.
- these exercises can be more sports specific and involve controlled repetitive movements
- **dynamic** stretching exercises are available on our website www.ssphysio.com.au for you to print off and take to training. Dynamic stretching has a more significant effect before the game than static stretching.

Static Stretching: usually involves a sustained stretch of the muscles while the body is not moving.

- how long should a **static** stretch be held? There are no definite rules but to be effective, it is recommended each stretch should be held firmly (no pain) for longer than 30 seconds
- keep in mind, **static** stretches held longer than 30 seconds tend to 'switch' the muscle off
- therefore, this type of stretch should not be undertaken pre-training/game
- beneficially, it is this type of stretch that can improve the flexibility of muscle groups
- **static** stretches are an essential part of the cool down, but should be done gently
- **static** stretches can be utilised at home for specific muscle groups to assist injury prevention as well as healing e.g. Achilles tendonitis, hamstrings, shoulders and back

How much should each type of stretching exercise be undertaken both at training and game time?

- **dynamic stretching** is to be a routine part of a supervised warm-up: each exercise about six reps and about 5-10 minutes in total
- **a static stretch** for each muscle group should be undertaken at least once during cool-down, about 5- 10 minutes in total

When on the substitute bench, players should change posture, complete mini jogs and dynamic stretches every five minutes. Remember to keep warm!

Please note: this information should serve as a guide only. When in doubt always seek advice from Southside Physiotherapy & Sports Injury Centre or your GP