

[IMAGE]

## The Do's and Don'ts of Stretching

If you're one of those natural athletes who finds it unnecessary to stretch or warm up before competition, you're probably setting yourself up for a serious muscle strain or tear. The proposed benefits of stretching include a direct or indirect decrease in muscle stiffness, and as any athlete will admit, muscle stiffness is a primary concern before, during and after strenuous physical activity.

Instead of ignoring the value of stretching and risking a painful, frustrating injury, why not take note of these recommendations on stretching that appeared in the August 2000 issue of *The Physician and Sportsmedicine*:

- Heat, ice and warmup all increase the effectiveness of stretching, although only warmup is likely to prevent injury.
- One 30-second stretch per muscle group is sufficient to increase range of motion in most healthy people.
- Contract-relax and hold-relax stretching techniques appear to be the most effective for increasing range of motion; however, the muscular contraction necessary for these techniques may increase the risk of injury compared with more static stretches.
- Individuals may be able to determine appropriate stretching duration and style by holding a stretch until no additional benefit is obtained.

Your doctor of chiropractic can tell you more about appropriate stretching techniques and outline a comprehensive exercise and wellness program suitable to your needs.

### *Reference:*

Shrier I, Gossal K. Myths and truths of stretching: individualized recommendations for healthy muscles. *The Physician and Sportsmedicine*, Aug. 2000: Vol. 28, No. 8, pp1-10.

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