

Proper Warm-Up for Maximal Sports Performance

Contrary to belief and conventional thinking, you should never stretch your hamstrings before any sort of athletic event. Nor should you stretch your quadriceps, calves or lower back. Most people would look at the previous statement and say, "What is this guy out of his mind?" but I assure you that I am not.

For years, sports teams ranging from Little League to the professional level have been standing in lines and bending down in an effort to touch their toes and stretch their hamstrings for the purpose of decreasing the chance of injury but in fact they are significantly increasing those chances.

This conventional pre-event ritual is known as "static stretching" which can be defined as any elongation of a muscle tissue without any motion. So in other words, "stretch and hold". Through years of experimentation and physiological studies, research has proven that this method of stretching will actually decrease neural transmission to the stretched muscles. When neural drive decreases it makes sense that the muscle will have a decreased power output. When a muscle's power is decreased, and the muscle is obviously weaker, the muscle is much more susceptible to strains. Hence, that's why static stretching should never be done before any athletic activity.

On the other hand any sort of stretching with motion (aka "**dynamic stretching**") is much more applicable to a pre-event warm up. This includes any type of stretching that involves the muscle being elongated under very short period of time intervals. For example, high knees, butt kickers, leg swings and lunges, just to name a few. With a proper dynamic warm-up, athletic performance can be increased significantly and the chances of injury seriously decreased.

There is a proper time and place for static stretching, but it is always after events when there will be no more explosive movements. For a full list of dynamic stretching techniques, log on to <http://www.bodybuilding.com/fun/md47.htm>. Type in "dynamic stretching" and you will be connected to the article.