

# Tips for safe stretches



There are many benefits to regular stretching. Not only can stretching help increase your flexibility, which is an important factor of fitness, but it can also improve your posture, reduce stress and body aches, and more.

Virtually every activity you do relies on ease of motion. Stretching can help in numerous ways. It can often relieve back pain, stiff necks, and sore knees when tight muscles are to blame. It can counteract too much sitting whether you're doing it for work or a pleasurable activity. If you're a runner, a tennis player, a golfer, a hiker, or a biker, the right stretching program may set you on a path toward better performance. And as you age, stretching can help keep you active and flexible, making it easier to accomplish innumerable everyday tasks involving walking, climbing stairs, or reaching.

While it's tempting to skip right to the stretches, it's best to think about safety first. These tips will help you make the best flexibility gains possible, while reducing your risk of injuries.

- 1.** Stretch for 10 minutes every day. Regular stretching improves your balance, strength and flexibility.
- 2.** Get advice to avoid injury. Check with your chiropractor or health professional before stretching if you have an injury, are unsure of how to stretch properly or have had a previous injury.
- 3.** Warm up your muscles before stretching. Try 10 minutes of gentle exercise like walking. Stretching cold muscles may result in injury.
- 4.** Hold a sustained stretch for 10 to 30 seconds. Don't bounce when stretching. Overstretching causes muscle to contract and can cause small tears in fibres.
- 5.** Only stretch to the point of mild discomfort. Once your muscle feels comfortable, increase the stretch then hold it again. If it hurts, you're pushing too hard.
- 6.** Balance your routine. Work opposing muscle groups each time you stretch. If you start by stretching the muscles in the back of your thigh, then follow by stretching the muscles at the front.

***This healthy living information is provided by your Doctor of  
Chiropractic and the International Chiropractors Association (ICA)***

