



Is Stretching Worth the Time?

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Does taking the time to stretch seem like a waste of time? Think again, stretching is an important part of any fitness program. Flexibility is decreased at a rate of 1-2% every year starting at age 19 so the older you get the more important it is to take the time to stretch and thus increase your flexibility. If you are flexible you will be able to move easier and safely engage in aerobic exercise and strength training with less risk of injury.

Some of the benefits of stretching include:

- Increased range of motion; which means decreased risk of injury because the body is more capable of dealing with the demands of movement.
- Improved coordination; flexibility increases neuromuscular coordination. It has been shown that the speed of nerve impulses is enhanced with stretching.
- Enhanced posture; the realigning of tissue structure that occurs through stretching helps promote and maintain good posture.
- Decreases back pain; lumbar-pelvic flexibility is important for decreasing stress to the lumbar spine. This is achieved through stretching muscles such as the hamstrings and hip flexors.
- Relives muscle tension; stretching helps relieve muscle tension and over tight muscles by breaking up tight spots and releasing lactic acid back into the muscle stream.

If you have never really followed a good stretching program you may not know where to start. There are many helpful resources out there, books, outlines, and such. The internet offers a lot of helpful stretching outlines with pictures and descriptions on how to stretch each muscle/muscle group. Make sure to hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds. Take your time. You may feel some discomfort when stretching tight muscles, that is okay but never

push to the point of pain or you could get injured. Never stretch cold muscles. Do some light stretching or range of motion activates first.

Black Hills Health and Education Center is a medical wellness retreat offering wellness programs and lifestyle change in a beautiful setting of the Black Hills in South Dakota. BHHEC is unique in that it offers a Christian based lifestyle program that includes everything from lodging and meals, physicals and comprehensive blood work, to daily treatments, exercise sessions with a personal trainer in the gym, classes presented by physicians, the Dietician, the Fitness Director, and other staff, cooking classes, sightseeing tours (Mt. Rushmore, Crazy Horse, Custer State Park Wild Animal Game preserve) and aquatics classes at the lovely swim center in Rapid City. Also included are counselling and stress-relief classes.