

- This is the least *effective* time to do them.
- They tend to cool you down and lower your heart rate because you are basically sitting/standing still.
- They reduce the power output of your muscles in the short term.

How to stretch

Static Stretches.

- Gradually stretch muscles close to their limits.
- RELAX and breath naturally.
- Gradually increase stretch and hold for 15-30 seconds.
- Come out of stretch completely, shake off limbs and repeat 4-5 times.



Examples include: Touching your toes, splits etc.

Dynamic Stretches.

- Priority on big, expansive, rolling, continuous *movements*.
- Start with smaller joints (fingers, wrists, ankles etc) progressing to bigger joints (shoulders, hips etc) finally full body movements.
- Try to avoid situations where you are motionless.



Examples include: Arm swings/rolls (upper body), high-knee steps and bum kicks (lower body), getting up/down from the floor (full body).

PNF Stretches.

- Use a partner to stretch a joint until you feel a tightness in the target muscle.
- Then contract the target muscle while partner resists with equal force (so your limb does not actually move). Keep contracting for 3-10 seconds.
- Relax and stretch and hold your limb for 15-30 seconds.
- Repeat up to 5 times.



Important: With PNF stretches, you do run the risk of injury if you/your partner are not sensible or don't know what you are doing! Please get expert help before you do these!

And finally...

Everyone can benefit from stretching, regardless of age. A very important factor to consider is frequency. You should make stretching part of every workout you do, but also you should try to do “mini-stretches”. These can take the form of 30-60 seconds of your favourite dynamic stretches, repeated several times throughout your normal day. This helps keep your joints mobile and loose, keeps your nervous system firing on all cylinders and is a great way to keep your brain awake while your at work/school!

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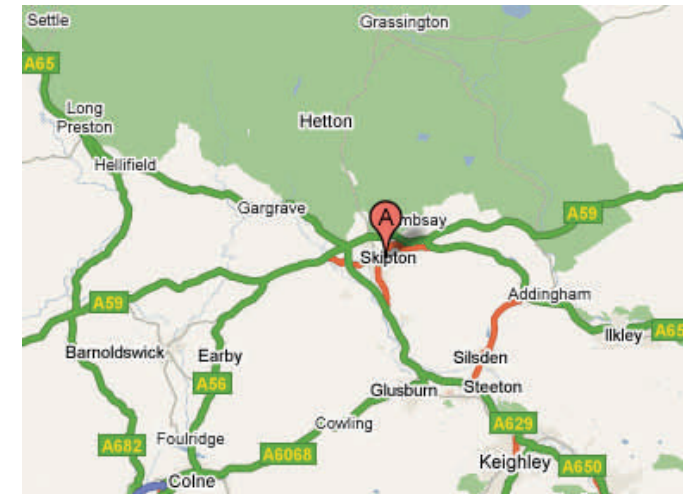
Stretching: Why, what, when and how.



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a stretch and not much movement. They are good for increasing the length of a muscle and flexibility of a joint.

Dynamic Stretches - These are characterised by big, rolling, flowing movements. You take a joint through its entire range, in all directions. They are good for preparing the body and mind for activity/exercise.

Ballistic Stretches - These are characterised by small, bouncing moves at the extremes of a joints range.

These have higher injury risks associated with them and as a general rule should be avoided unless you have a definite, specific need for them.

Examples include: Touching your toes with a bouncing action.

PNF Stretches - These are characterised by the use of a partner to help. These are probably the most advanced type of stretch and can be ignored by beginners. These are the best for increasing the length of a muscle and flexibility of a joint.

When to stretch.

Dynamic Stretches - as these are “preparatory” stretches and are “movement “ based, they are best done:

- Before exercise/physical activity.
- In the mornings.
- At start of the day.
- When you want to “wake up” the body/mind.

Static/PNF Stretches - as these need to be done when you are already warm and not feeling stiff, these are best done:

- After exercise/physical activity.
- In the afternoons/evenings.

While there is no real harm in doing static stretches before exercise, you may not want to bother because:

Stretching: Why do it?

We all know stretching is good for us, and most of us ignore it or just go through the motions.

Here are a few things stretching is good for:

- To increase the length of a muscle.
- To reduce risks of injuring ourselves.
- To help improve healing muscles/ligaments/tendons.
- To increase the range a joint can move through.
- To improve physical/athletic performance.
- To reduce aches/pains and joint stiffness.

So whether you are a couch potato, a healthy, normal person or an elite athlete, you can benefit by stretching.

What stretches are there?

There are 4 main types of stretches.

These are:

- Static.
- Dynamic
- Ballistic
- PNF (proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation)

Static Stretches - These are the stretches most people think about and are characterised by holding

