

How to... stretch

It's easy to overlook flexibility, but stretching is an important part of fitness – it helps to prevent injury and keep our joints healthy. Try these two stretches, particularly for cooling down

Don't forget!

1. Remember to breathe while you stretch.
2. Don't bounce – hold the stretch still.
3. Don't stretch cold muscles – do 5-10 minutes of light activity such as walking or housework first.



▲ 1. Hamstring stretch

Stretch area Back of thigh and calf

- Lie on the floor with your knees bent.
- Keep your back, head and shoulders in contact with the ground.
- Raise one leg with the knee slightly bent, holding behind the thigh or at the shin. To increase the stretch further, flex your foot by bringing your toes down towards your head.
- The leg should not shake, nor should the stretch be painful, so just stretch to the level where you feel a comfortable tension down the back of your thigh.
- Swap legs and repeat on the other side.

Stretch time Hold stretch still for 12-15 seconds on each leg; over time, increase to 15-30 seconds.

▶ 2. Pec stretch

Stretch area Chest and front of shoulder

- Stand with your back straight, chin tucked in and shoulders back and down.
- Clasp your hands behind your back and squeeze your shoulder blades together.
- Adjust the height of your arms so you feel a comfortable stretch across your chest area.

Stretch time Hold stretch still for 12-15 seconds; over time, increase to 15-30 seconds.

Tip This stretch can also be performed kneeling or sitting.

