

Stretching

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<http://www.cssphysio.com.au/hockeynewsletter.html>



General Stretches for the Lower Body

Regular stretching can improve the overall flexibility of muscles and joints. It is particularly beneficial when performed on muscles:

1. Prone to becoming tight.
2. That require full elongation.. This includes the calves, hamstrings, & groin..
3. That naturally do a lot of work, by nature of the demands of sport or work.

The main lower body stretches are shown below. There are some important principles to keep in mind when stretching:

- Muscles will stretch better when warm
- Stretching should be slow and gradual, without bouncing. Go to the point of strain, not pain
- Perform each stretch for 5 x 20-30 seconds.
- If any stretches cause discomfort, stop & seek advice from your physio or trainer.

There is additional information on stretching included at the end of this document.

1. **Calves:** There are two main calf muscles, and they are stretched differently:



(a) **Outer calf (gastrocs).** This is stretched with the knee straight.

(b) **Deep calf (soleus).** This is stretched with the knee bent.



2. **Hamstrings:** There are several variations of this stretch. Be careful not to strain the lower back – try to keep it straight.



3. **Quadriceps:** This muscle group can be stretched in standing, or while lying on the side or stomach.



4. **Hip flexors:** there are a few variations of this stretch. Combined stretches with other muscles are often good as they place the muscles in positions required for sport:



- Combined hip flexor and quadriceps stretch
- Combined hip flexor and hamstring stretch.



5. **Groin:** Again, there are many different ways to stretch, and each variation will affect different parts of the groin.



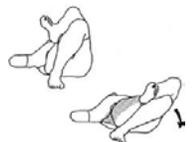
The hamstrings and groin muscles are closely related, and some stretches target both areas.



6. **Gluts / hip:** These stretches target the gluts and other muscles at the back of the hip joints.



It is also good to keep the hips flexible, as most sports require a lot of twisting through these joints.



7. **Low back:** This needs flexibility in every direction. However be careful doing a lot of forward bending stretches for the back, as we tend to do a lot of this already – every time we sit, or put our shoes and socks on. Often it is good to stretch the opposite way as a compensation for all the bending.



More about stretching

The stretches shown above are general stretches, and not all of them may be suitable for you. In particular, if you are carrying an injury, seek advice before stretching. There are circumstances where stretching may aggravate the injury. For example, you need to be particularly careful with hamstring stretches if you have a back injury or suffer from ‘sciatica’.

Static stretching before sport is still used extensively, but there is emerging evidence that it may hinder performance when implemented within 30 minutes of competition. It is a valuable addition to a ‘cool-down’ after sport when the muscles are still warm.

Stretching will be more effective if performed regularly – i.e., 3 or more times per week.

Regular stretching is not for everyone. Those who are naturally stiff, or who have tightness in certain muscles will benefit most. Those who are already very flexible or even ‘hypermobile’ do not need to spend much time stretching. In some cases this could be harmful.

For information on all types of injuries visit:

<http://www.cssphysio.com.au/forpatients.html>



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