STRETCHING — IS IT NECESSARY?

When you start a new exercise program, the muscles you use will respond by getting stronger and stronger muscles tend to shorten or become tighter. Stretching exercises help to maintain and improve your flexibility, and prevent tightness. Also it feels good to stretch your muscles after exercising.

If you stretch, it is important to stretch AFTER you walk, when your body is already warmed up. Stretching a warm muscle is easier than stretching a cold muscle, and stretching a cold muscle can cause an injury. Stretching too vigorously can also cause injury. Stretch just until you feel a mild pull, but not pain, and hold the stretch for 20 to 30 seconds.

For the calf muscle
Lean against a wall with one foot in front of the other. Bend the front knee and lean forward until you feel a mild stretch on the back of the calf. Hold for 30 seconds and do this twice on both legs.

For the hamstrings
Put one foot up on a stool or step. Keep your back straight and bend forward at the hips until you feel a mild stretch on the back of the leg. Hold 30 seconds and repeat twice.
For the quadriceps
Hold onto something for balance. Bend your knee and use your hand to grab the foot and stretch it behind you. You should feel a mild stretch on the front of your thigh. If you are not flexible enough to reach your foot, hold a towel, and wrap the towel around the ankle. Hold 30 seconds and repeat.

Above content provided by Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.
For advice about your medical care, consult your doctor.

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