

How Do I Warm Up?

HERE'S THE 411 ON STRETCHING. INCLUDE THESE EASY MOVES IN YOUR WALKING FOR WELLNESS PROGRAM TO KEEP YOU FLEXIBLE, ESPECIALLY WHEN TIME IS TIGHT.

If you're tired of feeling tight (your knees crack when you rise too quickly) or if you want to tie your shoe laces with ease (without having to sit down), it's important to add stretching to your new Walking for Wellness routine.

Flexibility (how well your joints and muscles move through a range of motion) decreases with age, inactivity or improperly performed exercise. Stretching exercises will help you with these issues, as well as walking form and injury prevention. They are also great ways to relieve stress.

We recommend that you take just 10 minutes to stretch after your five-minute walking "warm-up" and after each exercise session to help you "cool-down." Perform each stretch slowly and smoothly. Do not bounce. You should feel a gentle pull or stretch in the muscle without any pain.

Also, remember to work at your own pace. Don't compare your stretches to a dance diva's dynamics. Simply work on getting the best stretch that your body can achieve. You'll notice gradual improvements as you do the movements regularly.

Here are some simple stretches you can use after both warm-up and cool-down for your walking program:

The Butterfly



GOAL: TO STRETCH THE INNER THIGH MUSCLES
REPETITIONS: 4 TIMES, HOLD FOR 8 COUNTS

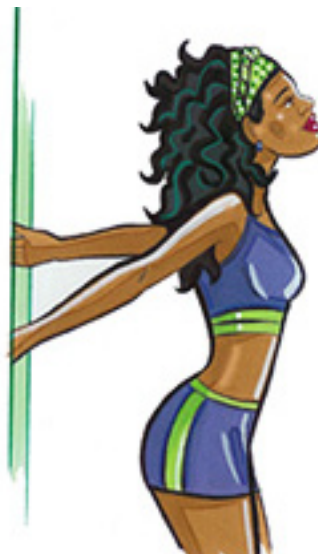
1. Sit down on the floor with the soles of your feet touching each other.
2. Place your elbows on the area where your legs fold (behind the knee).
3. Place slight pressure from your elbows down on your legs, enough to allow for a stretch.
4. Hold for 8 counts.
5. Repeat 4 times.
6. Try to keep your back straight. You may have a tendency to bend forward slightly, but try not to slump over.
7. Keep stomach tucked in and remember to breathe.

Arm Stretch

GOAL: TO STRETCH OUT ARMS AND BACK

REPETITIONS: 2 TIMES, HOLD FOR 8 COUNTS

1. Stand with your feet firm to the ground.
2. Keep your back straight and stomach tucked in.
3. Standing in front of a doorway, place your arms fully extended behind you and hold the frame with the tips of your fingers.
4. Pull away from the doorway slightly, allowing for your arms and back to feel the stretch.
5. Hold this position for about 8 counts.
6. Repeat twice.



Side Stretch

GOAL: TO STRETCH TRUNK

REPETITIONS: 5 TIMES ON EACH SIDE, HOLD FOR 5 COUNTS

1. Stand with your feet parallel, 12 inches apart.
2. Keep your back straight and stomach tucked in.
3. Clasp hands together and raise your arms above your head (some people may find it easier to keep one hand on their waist).
4. Bend trunk slowly to the right (this should take about five counts to be into position).
5. Hold this position for 5 counts.
6. Return to your upright position in 5 counts.
7. Do the same movement to the left side.
8. Repeat 5 times on each side.



Leg Stretch

GOAL: TO RELAX HAMSTRING MUSCLES

REPETITIONS: 1 TIME ON EACH SIDE, HOLD FOR 8 COUNTS

1. While on the floor, extend your left leg in front of you while keeping the right leg bent.
2. Point toes upward. Keep the back of the heel flat on the ground.
3. With your back straight, reach toward your toes as far as you can without straining.
4. Hold for a count of 8.
5. Repeat on the other side.



Squats

GOAL: STRETCH AND TONE THE THIGHS AND REAR (GLUTEAL) MUSCLES

Repetitions: 2 times, hold for 8 counts

- 1 Keep your back straight and stomach tucked in.
2. With your toes pointing slightly outward, separate your feet about 18 inches.
3. Bend your legs enough to lower your body 6 inches to a foot (don't stick out your butt).
4. Hold for 8 counts.
5. Repeat again.



Calf Stretch

GOAL: TO STRETCH HEEL AND PREVENT INJURIES

REPETITIONS: 1 TIME ON EACH SIDE, HOLD FOR 10 COUNTS

1. Use wall for balance, if needed.
2. Stand with right foot in front, with knee bent.
3. Place hands against wall or on waist, if you choose not to use a wall.
4. Keeping left leg straight, lean forward over bent knee. Keep body low and both feet on the ground.
5. Hold stretch for count of 10. (You should feel a tugging in the calf on the left leg).
6. Repeat on the other side.



Bend Over

GOAL: TO RELAX AFTER YOUR SERIES OF STRETCHES

REPETITIONS: 1 TIME, HOLD FOR 10 COUNTS

1. Bend over slowly with your knees slightly bent.
2. Your head should feel heavy, completely relaxed, and loose. Your chin is slightly tucked in.
3. Feel like your body is hanging loosely. This position should help relax your back, and shoulders, and your neck. It should not cause any straining.
4. Feel yourself deep breathing.
5. Stay in this position for at least ten seconds.
6. Slowly raise your body to the standing position.



The Stork

GOAL: TO STRETCH OUT THE QUADRICEPS (THE LARGE THIGH MUSCLES)

REPETITIONS: 1 TIME ON EACH SIDE, HOLD FOR 20 COUNTS

1. Keep your back straight and stomach tucked in.
2. Use a chair or a wall for balance, if necessary.
3. Stand on your right foot. Bend the left foot back at the knee and grasp toes with your right hand.
4. Pull right foot up gently until you feel your thigh stretching.
5. Hold for 20 seconds and repeat on other side.

