

Before Work Stretches

Before you do any physical work—especially lifting—do some stretches. Stretching gives your muscles a signal they are about to be used and helps improve range of motion and physical function. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that adults participate in no less than 10 minutes of stretching for a minimum of 2-3 days per week. A few minutes of stretching before starting work will make you feel better and may help avoid injuries. The following are a few stretches that involve major muscle tendon groups of the body and if performed regularly could help you work towards improving flexibility.

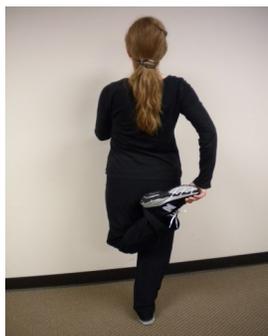
* For more questions or information about stretching and other fitness related components feel free to contact us at health.plus@vanderbilt.edu

1. Ankle Rotations: To help create circulation in your legs, lift your left foot up off the floor and rotate your foot and ankle 10-12 times counterclockwise. Repeat for right ankle. If necessary hold on to a wall or chair for balance.



2. Calf Stretch: Stand facing a wall or other object for support. Lean forward placing your arms on the wall and resting your head on the back of your arms. Step forward with one leg and place your foot on the ground with your knee bent. Step back with your other leg and keep that leg straight keeping your heel on the ground. To feel the stretch in your calf move your hips forward and keep your lower back flat. Make sure to keep toes forward and hold for 10-15 seconds. Do not bounce. Stretch both legs.

3. Achilles Stretch: This stretch is good for flexibility in the Achilles (back of the ankle). With a similar position as the previous stretch, slightly bend the knee of the leg that you stepped back with and lower your hips slightly. Be sure to keep your heel on the ground and your back flat. Hold for 10 seconds. You should feel this stretch in your Achilles tendon area.



4. Quad Stretch: Bend your knee towards your buttocks and grab the top of your foot with your opposite hand. Hold this stretch for 10-15 seconds. This is a good stretch that also helps with balance.

NOTE: Be careful with this stretch if you have knee problems. If your knee gets aggravated, try using the hand on the same side of the leg being stretched to grab the foot. This will allow your knee to bend at a more comfortable angle.

5. Inner Thigh Stretch: Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Bend your right knee slightly and shift your weight to the right side. You should feel a gentle stretch in the inner thigh (groin) of your left leg. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Do both sides.



6. Hip/Groin/Hamstring Stretch: Place the ball of your foot on a secure support of some kind (wall, fence, table). Keep the knee of your standing leg straight. Now bend the knee of the raised leg as you move your hips forward. This should stretch your groin, hamstrings, and front of hip. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Do both sides. If you can, for balance control, use your hands to hold onto the support. This stretch will make it easier to lift your knees.

7. Shoulder Shrug: Start with shoulders relaxed and arms hanging to the side. Shrug shoulders up as high as possible without bending your elbows. You should feel slight tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax your shoulders back down. Repeat 2-3 times.



8. Neck Stretch: Lean your head toward your right shoulder creating a gentle stretch on the left side of your neck. Hold a comfortable stretch for 5 seconds then repeat on the other side.

9. Upper Body Stretch: Interlace your fingers out in front of you at shoulder height. Turn your palms outward as you extend your arms forward to feel a stretch in your shoulders, middle of upper back, arms, hands, fingers, and wrists. Hold an easy stretch for 15 seconds, then relax and repeat.



Referenced from:

Anderson, B. (2000). *Stretching*. Bolinas, CA: Shelter Publications, Inc.

Thompson, W. R., Gordon, N.F., Pescatello, L.S., (Eds.). (2010). *ACSM's guidelines for exercise testing and prescription: eighth edition*. Baltimore, MD: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.