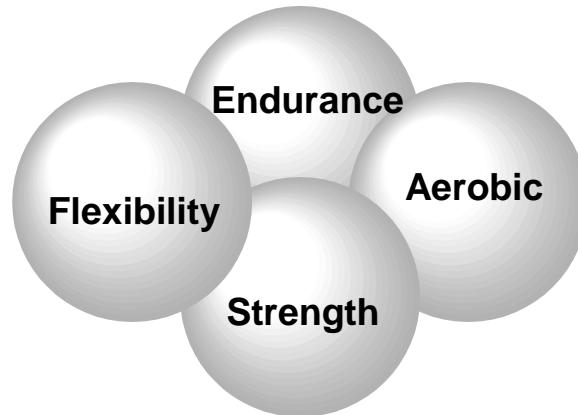




Session 21: Stretching: The Truth about Flexibility

To improve your level of health and fitness, consider...



A well-rounded exercise program includes all four components. Each one benefits your body in a different way.

One aim of the GLB program is to help you be physically fit...while maintaining safety.

You have learned about the health and fitness benefits of regular **aerobic** activities, ways to improve your **strength**, and have been encouraged to do gentle stretching exercises to help with **flexibility**.

Let's look at flexibility in more detail today.

What is flexibility?

- Flexibility refers to is a joint's ability to move through its full range of motion.
- You rely on being flexible to carry out everyday activities, such as bending to tie your shoe or twisting around to see who is calling your name.

Why is flexibility important?

- Flexibility is an important component of fitness that is often neglected. Flexibility is not something just for dancers, gymnasts, and martial arts athletes to work on. Flexibility is an important part of fitness for everyone regardless of age, gender, goals, or experience.
- Poor flexibility of the low back and hamstrings (back of upper leg) has been shown to contribute to low back pain.
- Having good flexibility will help alleviate stiffness, prevent injuries, and maintain good range of motion in the joints.

As you age, your muscles naturally lose strength and size and can become less supple and stiffer. This can affect the range of movement around your joints, which may lead to stiffness in the muscles and joints. It is this loss of tissue elasticity that can cause muscles and joints to tighten up. There are many different activities and exercises that benefit or improve flexibility.

At the beginning of the program, in session #4, we provided you with safety guidelines for stretching. Since these are VERY important, let's go over them again briefly.

Safety Guidelines for Stretching

A warm-up loosens the muscles to prevent injuries.

Other than swimming under water, never hold your breath in any exertion. Count out loud if that helps.

- Do a short warm-up *before* stretching.
- Wear comfortable clothing, nothing which limits movement
- Move slowly until you feel the muscle stretch. A safe stretch is gentle and relaxing.
- Hold the stretch steady for 10 to 30 seconds. Do NOT bounce.
- Relax. Then repeat 2 to 3 times.
- Be careful to stretch both sides of your body – Stay in balance.
- Stretch within your own limits. Don't compete.
- Never stretch if you have pain before you begin.
- If a particular stretch causes pain, stop doing it.
- Breathe slowly and naturally. Do NOT hold your breath.
- Always stay in control. Jerky unstable movements can lead to injury. And don't let gravity be the boss.

Important: NO PAIN IS GAIN
Listen to your body!

Do not bounce when stretching. Bouncing can lead to tearing muscles.

If you are walking on a small track be sure to reverse direction. This is another good example of balancing.

How to maintain (or improve) your flexibility:

The best way to maintain flexibility is to stretch regularly. Whatever your age, you must incorporate stretching exercises into your day at least once a day.

The F.I.T.T. Formula, which we discussed several times throughout the physical activity portion of the GLB intervention program, can also be used here to identify key components of a good stretching regimen necessary to improve your flexibility in a safe manner.

	What to do
Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 2-3 days/week
Intensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stretch to mild discomfort, NOT pain
Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Static stretches (NO BOUNCING)
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold each stretch 10-30 seconds

It is important that, when you are doing flexibility exercises, you make sure that you do at least one stretch for each of the major muscle groups and that you repeat each stretch at least 2-3 times.

The PARC-PH Stretching Packet (that you receive as part of this session) is designed to walk you through stretching exercises for the whole body.

A Sneak Peak at What's Ahead (The Next Session)



To do:

The Basics:

- Keep track of your weight.
 - Weigh yourself at home daily or at least once a week at the same time of day.
 - Record your weight in the Keeping Track book.
- Keep track of what you eat and drink using the Keeping Track book.
- Keep track of your physical activity in the Keeping Track book.
- Be physically active for at least 150 minutes per week.

Challenge Yourself:

- Add flexibility activities to your exercise program.

Additional Notes:
