

FORWARD MOTION
Sports Injury & Chiropractic
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Basic Stretching Exercises

Stretching exercises are vital to every runner's program. These exercises stretch the muscles in the leg and back that are tight. Maintaining flexible muscles in the legs and back is desirable as it allows the muscles and joints to work more efficiently and decreases the frequency of muscle injuries.

These exercises will stretch the muscles in the calf, thigh and back. They should be performed on a daily basis. On running days, do stretches before and after your run. On non-running days, do stretches at least once.

Each exercise should be performed in a slow, sustained manner, until a stretching or "burning" sensation is felt. When this happens, hold the stretch for 30 seconds, relax for 15 seconds, and repeat the stretch for another 30 seconds. This is a minimum amount of stretching.

Hamstrings

Starting position: Sit lengthwise along a table and place your right leg on the table. Rest your left leg on the floor or on a footstool (Fig. 1A).

Action: Lean forward over your right leg until you feel a stretch behind your thigh. Hold that position by grasping the right leg (Fig. 1B). Repeat with the left leg.

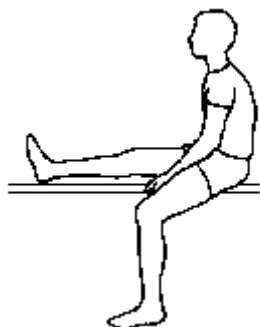


Fig. 1A



Fig. 1B

Quadriceps

Starting position: Stand with one arm holding onto a chair or wall (Fig. 3A).

Action: With the free hand, grasp the instep of the foot and pull the heel behind you toward your buttocks. **KEEP YOUR KNEE BACK** (Fig. 3B). Do not let it come forward.

Note: You should be standing erect throughout the entire stretch. DO NOT LEAN FORWARD. If you can touch your heel to your buttocks, slightly extend your back while doing this exercise.

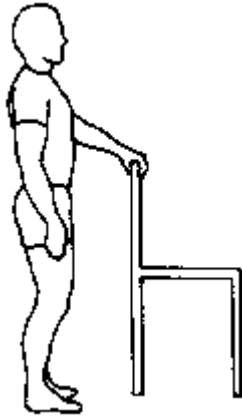


Fig. 3A

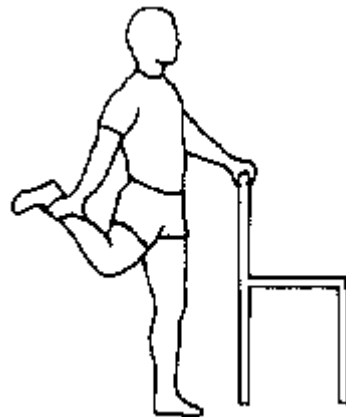


Fig. 3B

Calf Stretch

Stand at arms length from a vertical surface (wall, tree, lamppost). Place one foot ahead of the other; both feet facing the same direction. Stand erect, shoulders back, chest up. Moving forward, bend the front knee, keep the back leg straight at the knee, keep the foot of the back leg **flat** on the floor.

DO NOT bend forward at the waist, maintain an **arch** in the small of the back. Move the torso as far forward as you can, until you feel the pull in the back of the leg around the knee.

RIGHT



WRONG



Inner Thigh

1. Sit on floor with legs comfortably apart, reach through (if you can get your elbows to the ground fine, if not OK too.) **Keep your head UP and chest out** (this keeps your back straight).

Relax; hold for 30 seconds.

WRONG

RIGHT



2. From the above stretch, bring your feet together and **pull** them into your body (bottoms of feet facing each other). Use your elbows to push your knees down, **keep your head up and chest out**.

Relax; hold for 30 seconds.

WRONG

RIGHT



Hip and Lateral Thigh

Sitting as shown, cross one leg over the knee so that the foot is running parallel with the leg. Turn away from the knee and with your opposite elbow push the knee further out. Push and twist to a tension of comfort, relax, hold for 10 seconds. Do the other side and repeat the sequence.



Gluteals

Position yourself as shown, pull the left leg towards your chest. You will feel the stretch in the right gluteal muscles (buttock). Repeat on the opposite side.



Hip & Low Back

Hook your foot behind the knee. Roll yourself on your back so that the knee of the hooked foot is off the floor. Your balance should be that of a teeter-totter. This will pull on the hip socket naturally. You can try rolling slightly from side to side.

