



# Tips From the TSM Training Room

## Stretching

### Why is it important to stretch?

It is important to stretch because it improves flexibility. Flexibility is the range of motion that is available to a joint or joints. Flexibility is important because:

- It improves muscle balance around a joint, thus improving posture
- It reduces the chance of injury when playing a sport or in every day activities
- It increases the blood and nutrient supply to muscles and cartilage, thereby also reducing muscle soreness after training.
- Stretching ensures that your muscles/tendons are in good working order. The more conditioned they are, the better they can handle the stress of your sport and exercise

### When should I stretch?

- After a 3-5 minute “warm up” (jogging, biking, elliptical machine, etc.) before activity. The warm up increases blood flow, therefore making stretching more effective.
- After activity – this is known as the “cool down” portion of training. Stretching after activity may help to reduce lactic acid build up and may reduce the risk of delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS)
- Stretching should be done at least three times a week to see minimal improvement. It is recommended that you stretch five to six times per week to see maximal results.

### **How should I stretch?**

- Stretch only to the point where you feel tightness or resistance to stretch or perhaps mild discomfort. Stretching should not be painful.
- Once that point of tension is found, hold that stretch for 30-40 seconds. Repeat 2-3 times per session. Do not bounce.
- Always stretch slowly and with control
- Do not perform ballistic stretching (repeated bouncing past the tension point). This type of stretching may increase the chance for a muscle injury.

### **I do not have time to warm-up should I still stretch?**

- The warm-up helps to prepare the body for strenuous activity.
- The warm-up increases muscle temperature helping to facilitate the muscle pliability.

### **What is Dynamic Stretching? Should I stretch this way?**

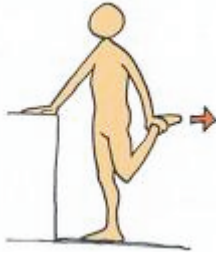
- Dynamic stretching uses speed of movement, momentum and muscle activity to stretch a muscle.
- Lunges, side-to-side jumps, and hurdles are all examples of dynamic stretches
- Improper use of dynamic stretching could lead to minor or severe muscle strains.
- Consult a Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) or a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) before beginning any type of dynamic stretching routine.

### **What should I stretch?**

- Many athletes complain of lower extremity tightness and soreness
- The Hamstrings, Quadriceps, Gastrocnemius, Hip Flexors, and Groin are the most commonly injured lower extremity muscles



- Hamstrings
  - Keep ankle dorsiflexed (toes pointed up) while stretching



- Quadriceps
  - Stand near a table or wall the use other arm for balance



- Gastrocnemius
  - Repeat stretch with slight bend in the knee to stretch the soleus (deeper muscle)



- Hip Flexors
  - Lean forward, then arch back and rotate hips posteriorly
  - Stretch should be felt in the front of the hip of the leg that is straight



- Groin
  - Use elbows to push knees down to table or floor
  - Keep bottom of feet/shoes together

**For more information contact the athletic training staff at Towson Sports Medicine, 410-828-4TSM (4876).**