

Be Well Aware – Health Article



What is Mobility and Proper Stretching?

What is Mobility?

Mobility is the ability to move a joint through a full range of motion. Stretching can be a means used to increase the mobility of one or multiple joints. It is important that every joint in your body can move through its full range of motion and be strong through its movement. Proper stretching is key to developing a full strong range of motion for any joint. Now a full range of motion is not like a contortionist, it is the full range of motion intended for a specific joint for example. The hip joint should be able to swing 0 to 125 degrees front to back and 45 degrees going side to side to be considered healthy.

Why do You Need Mobility?

Now 125 degrees and 45 degrees doesn't really mean anything in normal day to day use, but if you have dropped below that range of motion, you will begin to notice the limitations in your body. Considering that the hip is the most used joint in the body on a daily basis, it is important to keep it healthy! So to avoid any pain or tightness, it is also important to keep your mobility as efficient as possible. The number one way to do that is through proper stretching techniques.

Benefits of Stretching

The main benefit from stretching is injury prevention. When a joint is properly stretched regularly, it becomes stronger and less susceptible to injury. This applies to everyday life, as well as when working out. In fact it is more important when you are going to workout as exercise without stretching greatly increases your chance for injury.



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Proper Stretching Methods

So, what is proper stretching? One thing to remember is stretching is not meant to be painful. However, it doesn't mean it requires zero effort. Muscles and joints have a sweet spot where they like to be stretched. This can also vary from person to person and is based on their individual "flexibility". To find the sweet spot when stretching a muscle, go to the point where you start to feel a tug on the targeted muscle then that is where you will hold for 15-30 seconds. It is important to not over stretch, which can be done by holding a stretch for too long or holding a stretch too deep (literally over stretching). Stretching in an improper way will negate any benefits proper stretching would have.

Applying Proper Stretching Techniques

Ok so now that we know how to stretch, let's focus on when to stretch. For starters, stretching before a workout is always recommended. It should be between 5-10 minutes long and focus on the muscles that will be used throughout the workout. This should be an active stretch as you continuously move your body rather than holding

stretches. Generally start by stretching the larger muscle groups working down to the smaller muscles. The same method should be applied to post workout stretching which should also last for 5-10 minutes but instead consists of static stretches and holding poses. If you have been in the same position, standing or sitting for more than an hour, it might be a good idea to stretch. Whether that means going through some favorite stretching exercises or simply a walk with arm swings and circles. Letting the blood flow and giving your joints and muscles a chance to move will be highly beneficial.

Final thoughts

Stretching is one of those simple things that can easily be forgotten about. However, when it is done properly it will benefit your life with the gift of mobility. Stretching will prevent and relieve the symptoms of arthritis. Stretching will maximize workout results and performance. Stretching will even help with job performance and handling the day to day mayhem of life, helping you think clearer and focus better on the task at hand.

Quick stretching tips for better movement

- **Focus on major muscle groups**
- **Don't bounce.**
- **Aim for pain free range of motion**
- **Make stretches activity specific.**
- **2-3 times a week for, 5-10 minutes is all you need to see improvement**

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