



Sports Safety

WEEK 15: 31 AUGUST, 2020

WARM UP, COOL DOWN, AND BE FLEXIBLE

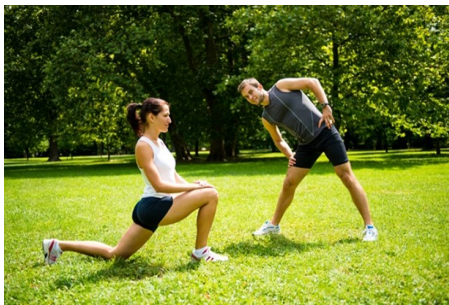
An effective fitness program is more than aerobic training and strength building. To really reap the benefits of exercise, you need to add flexibility training to the mix. Stretching can help your body get ready for exercise. It is also an essential part of recovering from aerobic activity. All exercise sessions should end with stretching – and not just for the mental relaxation benefits. The more flexible you are, the less likely you are to be injured during exercise.

Warm Up

A good warm up prepares your body for more intense activity. It gets your blood flowing, raises your muscle temperature, and increases your breathing rate. It gives your body time to adjust to the demands of exercise. The simplest way to warm up is to do an aerobic activity at an easy pace. If cycling is what you plan to do, then start out slowly in a low gear. How long you spend warming up will depend on your fitness level. If you are newer to exercise, your body (and your mental resolve!) will respond better with a longer warm up. Once your muscles are warm, spend a few minutes on stretching.

Cool Down

Just as a warm up prepares your body for exercise, an effective cool down gives your body time to recover. Your cool down begins as you gradually decrease your intensity level at the end of your aerobic exercise session. For example, if you have been walking at a quick pace, begin cooling down by slowing your steps and reducing your arm swing. Walk at a comfortable pace until your breathing and heart rate have returned to normal. Once you are breathing easily, stretch while your muscles are still warm.



Flexibility Exercises

Stretching is too often neglected by exercisers pressed to fit workouts into their busy schedules. This common mistake can reduce the effectiveness of exercise because better flexibility results in better fitness. By increasing your flexibility you can improve your ability to move around. You will have less muscle tension and your posture will likely improve. Most importantly, stretching after each workout reduces your risk for injury. Get the most out of your flexibility training by following these simple guidelines:

- Always warm up before your stretch. Stretching cold muscles can cause injury.
- Stretch slowly and gently. Breathe into your stretch to avoid muscle tension. Relax and hold each stretch 10 to 30 seconds.
- Do not bounce your stretches. Ballistic (bouncy) stretching can cause injury.

Stretching should not hurt. If you feel pain, take the stretch easier, breathe deeply and relax into it.

By William C. Cottrell, M.D.

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Protective equipment for specific sports reduce risk of injury. Make sure you have the right gear for the sport and that it fits correctly.

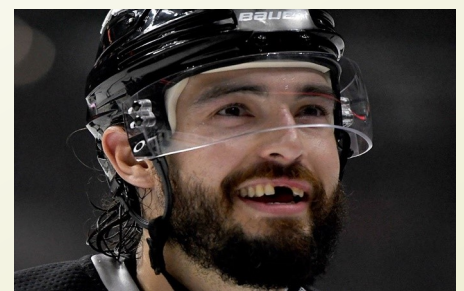
Inspect your gear checking for worn areas, missing buckles or snaps, and worn or compressed padding. Poorly fitting or broken gear can be uncomfortable and will not offer the desired level of protection.

Helmets are essential in preventing traumatic brain injuries caused by impact during sporting activities. These helmets are designed and tested according to the impacts

of different types of sports, so a baseball helmet cannot be worn by a cyclist or boxer. A helmet can reduce the amount of force applied to the brain and protect against severe cuts, skull fractures, and broken facial bones **but cannot prevent a concussion from happening.**

Protective sports eyewear may include specially designed sunglasses for skiers or snowboarders, such as 3-mm polycarbonate lenses with ultraviolet filter to protect the eyes from impacts and radiation. Sports goggles are also recommended for use by tennis players and other sports, like hockey and racquetball. **Up to 90% of eye injuries are preventable with proper equipment.**

To protect from dental injuries, athletes should wear mouth guards. When mouth guards are worn and fitted properly, they have been shown to reduce the rate of dental and facial injuries. Basic mouth guards are inexpensive and widely available. Custom fit mouth guards are ideal to provide the best fit, but can be more expensive than the boil and bite mouth guards.



Pads and guards range from hard plastic to soft padding, depending on the type of sport and expected injuries. Make sure they are the right type for the sport and that they are the right size for the player. Always inspect your protective pads and guards for cracks and other damage before use.

Padded or reinforced clothes are uniquely designed for certain sports, as are the shoes. Using the correct shoe for the sport can prevent serious injuries. Shoes also take a beating in many sports and need to be replaced when worn out or damaged.

Finally, be a good role model for others: **Wear your protective equipment and follow the rules of the sport!**



EXERCISE SAFETY TIPS

Regardless of the sport or fitness activity you enjoy or looking to pick up, take the time to make sure you're doing it safely.

Almost anybody can safely take up walking, and light to moderate exercise is usually fine for healthy adults with no troublesome symptoms. But it's wise to talk to a doctor if you have any questions about your health or plan to start more vigorous workouts, especially if you haven't been active, if you're starting a new activity, or if you have a previous injury.

Here are some general tips that can help you avoid injuries:

- Take five to 10 minutes to warm up and cool down properly.
- Be aware that training too hard or too often can cause overuse injuries like stress fractures, stiff or sore joints and muscles, and inflamed tendons and ligaments. Sports prompting repetitive wear and tear on certain parts of your body — such as swimming (shoulders), jogging (knees, ankles, and feet), tennis (elbows) — are often overuse culprits, too. A mix of different kinds of activities and sufficient rest is safer.
- Listen to your body. Hold off on exercise when you're sick or feeling very fatigued. Cut back if you cannot finish an exercise session, feel faint after exercise or fatigued during the day, or suffer persistent aches and pains in joints after exercising.
- If you stop exercising for a while, drop back to a lower level of exercise initially. If you're doing strength training, for example, lift lighter weights or do fewer reps or sets.
- For most people, simply drinking plenty of water is sufficient. But if you're working out especially hard or doing a marathon or

triathlon, choose drinks that replace fluids plus essential electrolytes.

- Exercising vigorously in hot, humid conditions can lead to serious overheating and dehydration. Slow your pace when the temperature rises above 70°F. On days when the thermometer is expected to reach 80°F, exercise during cooler morning or evening hours or at an air-conditioned gym. Watch for signs of overheating, such as headache, dizziness, or nausea.
- Delayed muscle soreness that starts 12 to 24 hours after a workout and gradually abates is a normal response to taxing your muscles. By contrast, persistent or intense muscle pain that starts during a workout or right afterward, or muscle soreness that persists more than one to two weeks, merits a call to your doctor for advice.



Some additional tips if you're going to the gym or using weights:

- Gradually increase your time, intensity, or reps of an exercise. A great body isn't built in a day, and doing too much too soon will increase your risk of injury.
- For strength training, good form is essential. Initially use no weight, or very light weights, when learning the exercises.

Never sacrifice good form by hurrying to finish reps or sets, or struggling to lift heavier weights. Working on core stability, positioning, and posture will help prevent injuries and sore muscles.

- Use a spotter or gym partner. A spotter, especially on exercises such as the bench press or squats, where you're potentially under a lot of weight, should be mandatory when lifting heavy. A spotter can also check your form to make sure you're not setting yourself up for a major injury and step in before it's too late.
- Be aware of your surroundings. We often like to be 'in the zone' while working out: earbuds in, eyes focused straight ahead and concentrating on getting the work done. However, not paying attention to what's around you can be bad news. You don't want to walk into someone's dumbbell flies or get kicked in the head by a hanging knee-up because you were too focused on making a beeline for the squat racks. Keep your eyes open.
- If you're not sure, ask someone. This might be the one that almost nobody does but the one with the most potential to make gyms a safer place. Maybe you need a spotter for your last set. Better to ask than to try it yourself and get yourself injured. And nobody wants to be the person in the gym who doesn't know how to do an exercise or use a piece of equipment properly, but if we just swallow our pride and ask a more experienced member, we might just learn some things. Gym members might seem scary sometimes but we're all there for the same reason — reach out and ask if you need help.

Check out fitness.marines.mil for information about sports activities and workout tips to increase your fitness level safely.

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**PERCENTAGE OF
ADULTS
GETTING THE
RECOMMENDED
AMOUNT OF
EXERCISE**



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