
FLEXIBILITY GUIDE
@markwyatt_fitness

Welcome to your flexibility guide which has been designed to help you move better and subsequently feel better. If you have any questions while studying this guide, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

What is flexibility?

Flexibility is the ability of a muscle/group of muscles to lengthen. This guide is designed to help you understand why it is important and the optimal way to including flexibility training into your lifestyle.

Why is it important?

Improving flexibility will allow you to create greater range of motion (ROM) and also correct muscular imbalances. Research by McMahon et al. (2014) shows us that using longer ROM during your resistance training will result in more muscle and strength development when compared to shorter ROM [1]. A common reason why some people cannot train with full-ROM is due to limited flexibility. Static stretching, performed consistently, can help improve your long term ROM and subsequent performance.

What if I am not interested in increasing muscle or strength, I hear you ask. A flexibility programme can also lead to improved postural realignment leading to overall greater movement. Those interested in posture can find it discussed in greater detail in my 'Posture Plan' (Click Here). Finally, investing time in flexibility will often create a relaxing environment generating a positive state of mind for the individual.

How long should we stretch for?

Current evidence indicates that static stretches of 30-60s are most effective for improving flexibility [2]. Recent research by Thomas et al. (2018) adds to the current body of research by showing that it is beneficial to statically stretch a muscle for 5-10 minutes per week to achieve long term ROM improvement [3]. Therefore, if you would like to improve flexibility in a specific region of the body, evidence suggests 5-10 sets per week with each set lasting 30-60 seconds. I would therefore recommend holding each stretch in the guide for 30-60 seconds and, if possible, spread your stretching equally throughout the week (e.g. 1-2 sets of stretching per muscle group 5x a week) to achieve maximum benefits.

Stretch plan

On the next page I have separated stetches into sections to target different joints of the body and the related muscles. The stretches in each section are listed in order from basic to complex. I recommend choosing one stretch in each section. However if you feel you have an area of tightness, further stretches can be applied. This plan will take less than 15 minutes to complete if you pick 8 stretches and hold each stretch for 45 seconds. I recommend aiming to achieve a stretch exertion of 6-7 on a scale of 1 – 10, where 1 is no exertion and 10 is maximal exertion. If you attended my stretch class online and would like to follow the session on YouTube, I have attached a link at the end of this guide.

Ankle

We often overlook the ankle as an area of focus with regards to stretching. However, lack of ROM within the ankle can not only contribute to foot injuries but also joint issues further up the body. Two main movement patterns at the ankle are dorsiflexion (foot towards the shin) and plantarflexion (foot away from the shin).

1) Ankle Dorsiflexion (Click Here)
2) Ankle Dorsiflexion Advanced (Click Here)

1) Ankle Plantarflexion (Click Here)
2) Ankle Plantarflexion Advanced (Click Here)

Knee

Knee injuries are quite common, and it is key to strengthen both the quadricep (knee extensor) and hamstring (knee flexor) to support overall health. This is discussed in further detail in my 'Strength Plan' (Click Here). The quadricep is a highly active muscle used in walking, running, and stepping to name but a few. Below are two stretches to lengthen the muscle.

1) Quadricep Standing (Click Here)
2) Quadricep Kneeling Advanced (Click Here)

Hip

The hip is a complex joint and I recommend you perform three stretches from the following (picking one from each section). Remember the stretches progress from basic to complex. Stretching the muscles surrounding the hip (predominately the glutes) can often help to relieve lower back discomfort and allow greater ROM in various movement patterns involving the legs.

1) Hip – Lying Glute (Click Here)
2) 90/90 (Click Here)
3) Pigeon (Click Here)

1) Adductor Butterfly (Click Here)
2) Kneeling Adductor (Click Here)

1) Spinal Rotation Seated (Click Here)
2) Spinal Rotation Lying (Click Here)

Hip/Knee

When we sit down for prolonged periods, we often flex at the knee which causes the hamstring to shorten. Below are 3 stretches to lengthen the hamstring, two in a standing position and one lying on the floor.

1) Standing Hamstring (single) (Click Here)
2) Standing Hamstring (single) Advanced (Click Here)
3) Lying Hamstring (Click Here)

Shoulder

Many of us will spend time in the day sitting down and this can contribute to a protracted (rounded shoulder) position. This will shorten our chest and cause muscle tightness over time. Stretching the chest and anterior deltoid is an excellent way to lengthen the muscle and reduce tightness. This can contribute to improved posture, although back strengthening is also an important aspect. This is discussed further in my 'Posture Plan' (Click Here)

1) Scorpion (Click Here)
2) Seated Shoulder Extension (Click Here)

Full Body Stretch Class

I have created a 30-minute full body stretch flow which is designed to leave you feeling more flexible and subsequently able to move better. The full class can be followed on YouTube by using the following link (Click Here). I will be posting further videos and workouts to this channel so please subscribe to be kept up to date.

Next steps

I hope you have enjoyed this flexibility guide and are able to move better and subsequently feel better. I would like to take this opportunity to bring to your attention three further plans I have designed also based around performance (Posture/Mobility/Strength). These can be accessed on my website via clicking the following link (Click Here).

References:

1. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23629583

2. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11252465

3. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29506306