

Enhance Your Performance: with Massage and Stretching



Advanced Remedial and Sports Massage Therapy

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Advanced Remedial & Sports Massage Therapy + Stretching - an essential training aid for any sports person.

Massage has become an integral part of the new athletic regimen, for athletes of all levels and abilities. Massage has become a necessary ingredient for a complete workout. More and more people are realising that a complete workout routine includes not only the exercise itself, but also caring for the wear-and-tear and minor injuries that naturally occur with strenuous movement. The physiological and psychological benefits of massage make it an ideal complement to a total conditioning program.

Anyone who routinely stretches their physical limits through movement such as running, cycling or swimming can benefit from a massage.

Incorporating massage in your conditioning program has many benefits. It helps you get into good shape faster, and with less stiffness and soreness. It helps you recover faster from heavy workouts, and relieves conditions which may cause injury.

The Benefits of Advanced Remedial & Sports Massage

- reduce the chance of injury, through proper stretching and event preparation, and through deep tissue massage
- identify and treat problems before they become chronic
- re-align and maintain alignment of body
- improve range of motion and muscle flexibility, resulting in improved power and performance
- shorten recovery time between training sessions
- maximise the supply of nutrients and oxygen through increased blood flow
- enhance elimination of metabolic by-products of exercise

Stretching and Mobilisation

When muscles have to make repetitive movements in a limited range of motion (e.g. running), the muscle fibres shorten and this can cause imbalances which can lead to strains and injuries. Another consequence for the runner, is the shortening of stride length, which has major implications. A reduction in stride length of just 50mm would equate to a slowing down over one mile, by the time taken to run 80 metres, or for a marathon, the time taken to run more than 2 kilometres. So you can see the importance of maintaining stride length.

Stretching and mobilisation can restore the muscle length and can increase it to best resting length.

Mobilisation is achieved by taking each joint, (hip, knee, ankle and foot) through its full range of motion to re-educate the brain that these joints do have this range of motion. This should be done after each training session or event.

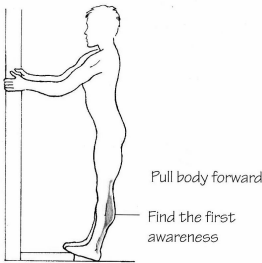
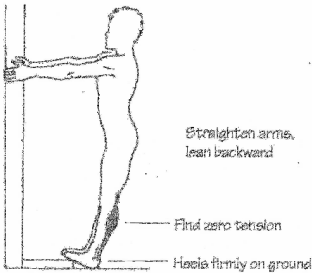
Stretching can be achieved by using the following method, which although very gentle is hugely effective. The reasoning behind the method is that when a muscle is working, it cannot lengthen beyond its current resting length, therefore the gentler the better.

It is important to follow the following rules when stretching:

- Warm up – this very important!!
- Isolate the muscle / muscle group, important so that you do not load other structures such as ligaments and joint capsules.
- Find zero tension: where there is no awareness of tension in a muscle group because there is no load and resulting tension.
- Find the first awareness: the first gentle reflex contraction against your loading force is the first awareness of a stretch.
- Less is best, listen to your body. The gentler the initial load the better.
- Allow the loss of tension, there is no time limit on this. Stretches cannot be timed. The gentle tension must be steady and constant if the stretch is to be effective.

Calf Stretch 1: Gastrocnemius

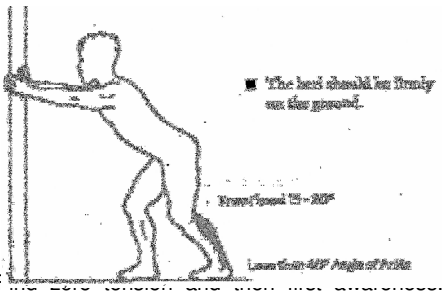
This the superficial muscle of the calf



Hold stretch until loss of tension, then repeat.

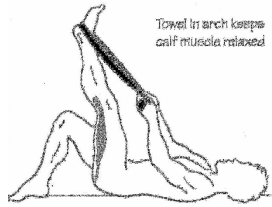
Calf Stretch 2: Soleus

The deep muscle of the calf



Hold until loss of tension, then repeat.

Hamstring Stretch



■ The better the isolation, the fewer structures loaded, the better the biofeedback.

Find zero tension and then first awareness. Hold until loss of tension, then repeat.

(Note: it is **impossible** to stretch hamstrings in **any** standing posture, as the muscles involuntarily contract to stabilise your pelvis and will remain contracted as long as you remain bent at the waist.)

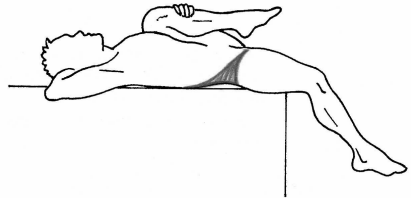
Quadriceps Stretch

Thigh in Alignment with Body



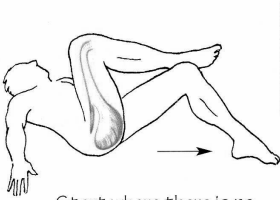
Find zero tension and then first awareness. Hold until loss of tension, then repeat.

Hip Flexor Stretch



With this stretch it not easy to find zero tension, allow gravity to take the side being stretched to first awareness, but do not force, hold until loss of tension. It is vital that the lumbar spine (low back) remains flat on the table, otherwise it increases the pull on the vertebrae and intervertebral disks. Repeat.

Posterior Hip Muscles Stretch:



Start where there is no tension in hip muscles

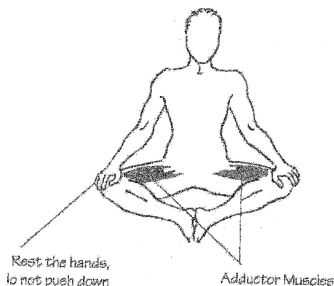
Find zero tension



Use hands to lift leg by grasping thigh beneath knee

Find first awareness. Hold until loss of tension, then repeat.

Groin (Adductors) Stretch



Rest the hands, do not push down

Adductor Muscles

Rest your back against a wall and place your heels together starting well away from the body at the point of zero tension. Allow your legs to fall towards the floor allowing gravity to act. Do not push down with your hands. Hold till loss of tension. Repeat.

In conclusion;

To maintain good posture, joint position and muscle function we must look after the weight bearing muscles of the lower limb. To do this we must ensure that the muscles are at their best resting length and for this they need to be stretched as shown. Prior to starting this regime, sports and remedial massage therapy will help prepare the muscles and regular massage is the ideal companion for any stretching programme.

For further information:

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