

NEW SERIES OF JUST DO IT

GREAT ATHLETIC TRAINING EXERCISE SERIES

DO YOU NEED TO STRETCH BEFORE OR AFTER SPORTS

YES, BUT IT DEPENDS ON TYPE. Bottomline: Static stretching does not prevent injuries and may decrease performance in sports, while dynamic stretching can help performance. Do dynamic stretching and motions before training or sport for several minutes. You can use limited static stretching before training or sport as a self assessment tool but not aggressively. Static stretching can be done after training or sport at body parts where you have a history of injury or where there is limited motion. Stretching can also be used as a means of relaxation post training or sport. Please see my webpage for self assessment

Why: In **2014, Lauersen et al** performed an enormous review of studies on stretching and injury prevention. They evaluated the results of 26,000 people who between them had experienced 3,500 injuries. They found that good balance reduced injury risk by 35%, better strength reduced injury risk by nearly 70% and stretching did not reduce injuries significantly at all (all types of stretching were looked at). Static stretching can also decrease power performance. See details below.

Do it Right!
Exercises you Should Do

Dynamic stretches are active movements where joints and muscles go through a full range of motion. They can be used to help warm up your body before exercising. Dynamic stretches can be functional and mimic the movement of the activity or sport you're about to perform. For example, a swimmer may circle their arms before getting into the water.

Static stretching requires you to move a muscle as far as it can go without feeling any pain, I say first resistance barrier, then hold that position for 20 to 45 seconds. You should repeat static stretches two to three times each. This is a very effective way to increase flexibility.

I actually love to stretch. I especially like dynamic stretching where your body is brought through non abrupt (non ballistic) ranges of motions. It helps rehearse the movement patterns so the muscles tend to get excited a little bit earlier and faster which can help improve power and increase coordination. Dynamic stretching has been shown to acutely increase power, sprint, jump and improve performance ([source](#)). It increases muscle temperature, which then reduces the resistance and increases the flexibility. Some of my favorite motions are arm circles, leg rotations, high knee lifts, archer poses, hip hikes, ankle pumps etc. I do these before strenuous exercise to prepare the body. I sometimes do some static stretches as a self assessment tool before training in order just to judge how the muscles are doing. Sometimes you do not know if there is an issue unless you stretch a muscle. I do not over stretch them. I just take the muscle to first resistance barrier and hold briefly. Research is clear that there is a decrease in performance if you over stretch before high intensity work like lifting and jumping, but this decrease is short lived and is really not that important for most people. After training I stretch statically for a few muscles that are specific for me and my previous training history. That is why it is important to have your range of motion assessed so to find areas that may need to be stretched. [Please see my webpage on stretching for more information.](#) I am not saying not to do static stretching. It is one of the key treatments in physical therapy so it has its place especially in sports that require a large range of motion like dance or gymnastics. There is no real health benefit from being overly flexible though, while there may be some dangers. I would suggest targeted stretching in the areas that your assessment or history suggest needs to be stretched so you can spend more time on other fitness components like strength and aerobic. [Please see why stretching doesn't help on this webpage.](#)