

# Stretching Tips!

*Discover 7 stretching secrets to improve your flexibility.*

*...so you can move freely and continue to enjoy an active, healthy lifestyle.*

**+ Plus...**

- Safe guard yourself against dangerous stretches.
- Learn which type of stretching to use, and when to use it.
- Discover how to use stretching to speed up your recovery.
- And learn advanced stretching techniques to minimize sports injury and take your athletic ability to the next level.



# Stretching**Tips**



## **Stretching Tips**

Publisher: The Stretching Institute™  
Address: 4747 36th Street, Suite 3208  
Long Island City NY 11101  
United States  
Telephone: 877-580-7771  
Website: <http://stretchcoach.com>

Copyright © The Stretching Institute™

This publication may be freely distributed in its entirety. No part of this publication may be altered, changed or segmented. Inquires should be addressed to the publisher.

**Warning:** The information presented in this publication is intended as an educational resource and is not intended as a substitute for proper medical advice. Please consult your physician, physical therapist or sports coach before performing any of the exercises described in this publication, particularly if you are pregnant, elderly or have any chronic or recurring muscle or joint pain. Discontinue any exercise that causes pain or severe discomfort and consult a medical expert immediately.

# Stretching**Tips**

## Contents

**Welcome.....5**

**Tip #1 - Know Your Limits.....6**

Did you know that stretching is a great way to avoid an injury? It's true! But just like any other form of exercise, you need to know what you're doing. If you haven't exercised in a while, the very first thing you need to know is your limits. Push yourself too far, and you could end up with an injury. Discover how to recognize your limits and avoid serious injury with Stretching Tip #1.

**Tip #2 - Don't Stretch an Injury.....9**

Many people don't realize how important stretching is until it's too late. An injury happens, and suddenly stretching becomes a priority. If you've ever sustained a sports injury, you need Stretching Tip#2.

**Tip #3 - Stretching and the Warm Up.....11**

Are you warming up properly before your workout? Are you even warming up at all? If the answer is no, you need to read Stretching Tip #3. A good warm up is essential to any exercise program if you want your body to achieve maximum results and avoid serious injury or debilitating setbacks.

# Stretching**Tips**

## **Tip #4 - Stretch Before and After Exercise.....13**

Knowing when to stretch is as important as knowing how to stretch. Is it better to stretch before or after you exercise? For how long should you stretch? Is stretching necessary? Find all the answers to these questions and more in Stretching Tip #4.

## **Tip #5 - The Major Muscle Groups.....15**

You know that stretching is an important part of any physical training program. You also know that stretching helps you avoid serious injuries. You might already be stretching muscle groups specific to your activity, but did you know that you need to stretch all of the major muscle groups for maximum results? What are these muscle groups, and how do they work together to increase your performance? Get all the answers in Stretching Tip #5.

## **Tip #6 - Be Aware of Your Posture.....17**

Athletes spend countless hours perfecting their techniques in any given sport. Form follows function, and for the best results in any physical activity, you need a solid foundation to start. Stretching is that foundation, but how can you be sure you're stretching properly? Is your posture as it should be? Is your form correct? If not, you may be doing some serious damage without knowing it. Learn the key to the perfect stretch with Stretching Tip #6.

# Stretching**Tips**

## **Tip #7 - Breathing and Stretching.....19**

Breathing is one aspect of exercise we often take for granted. Everyone knows how to breathe; right? It's as easy as... well, breathing. Not true! Many people have never learnt how to breathe properly while exercising and end up paying the price for it. Learn the secrets of breathing and stretching with this Bonus Stretching Tip.

## **Conclusion.....21**



# Stretching**Tips**

## Welcome

...to Stretching Tips, where you'll get all the answers to your questions about how to use stretching properly to improve your flexibility so you can move freely and continue to enjoy an active, healthy lifestyle.

The following pages are filled with tips, tricks and tactics to help you stretch properly so you get the most out of your time spent stretching.

And once you've had a chance to look through the following tips don't forget to grab your copy of my 1 hour MP3 audio presentation called *Stretching Secrets Exposed*, where I take you beyond the basics and discuss little known stretching secrets that will revolutionize the way you think about stretching and flexibility.

[Click Here to Download the MP3 Audio!](#)

And if this report has been given to you by a friend or family member make sure you visit my website and get on my [VIP members list](#), where you'll get exclusive content, private Q&A's, giveaways, and more. ...And it's all FREE!



Yours in health,

*BRAD WALKER*

*Brad Walker*

*The Stretch Coach*

# StretchingTips

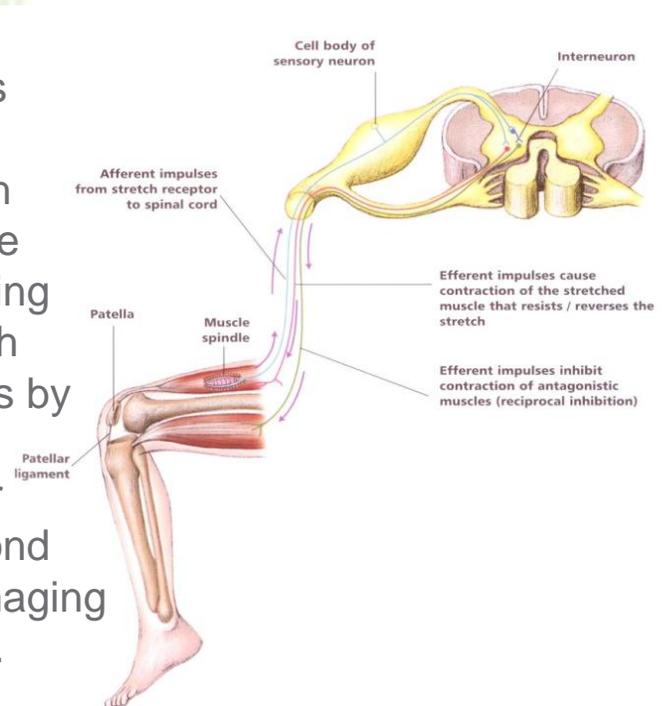
## Tip #1 - Know your Limits

In this lesson we'll focus on the very first step in any workout program: **Knowing Your Limits.**

Your workout should be a pleasurable part of your day, whether it's the first thing in the morning or the last thing in the evening. Although you might experience some soreness during or after a workout, it should not be the type of pain that interferes with the way you function. The same goes for stretching. If you stretch properly before and after a session in the gym, you'll decrease your chances of serious injury and avoid soreness and pain.

This is where knowing your limits come into play. Stretching is not an activity that should cause pain: Its whole purpose is to avoid pain. When you stretch, you might feel a little mild tension as you work out some of the stiffness, but if you feel any pain beyond that, you've gone too far. Here's why:

When you stretch muscles and tendons to the point of pain, the body employs a defense mechanism called the stretch reflex. This is the body's safety measure to prevent serious damage from occurring to the muscles and tendons. The stretch reflex protects the muscles and tendons by contracting them, thereby preventing them from being stretched beyond their limits. If you try to force your body beyond this fail-safe point, you run the risk damaging muscle tissues, tendons and ligaments.



# Stretching**Tips**

The diagram on the previous page shows how nerve impulses triggered by the stretch reflex travel between the spinal column and the muscles.

## What to Avoid When Stretching

Many people have never learnt how to stretch properly. Maybe you've done this yourself: You watch other people stretching in the gym and try to imitate what you see. But who is to say that the person you're watching is doing it right? Here are some of the most common mistakes made while stretching:

- **Bouncing.** Many people have the mistaken impression that they should bounce to get a good stretch. Bouncing will not help you and could do more damage as you try to push too far. Every move you make should be smooth and gentle. Lean into the stretch gradually and push to the point of mild tension. Each time you'll be able to go a little further, but don't force it.
- **Not Holding the Stretch Long Enough.** If you don't hold the stretch long enough, you may fall into the habit of bouncing or rushing through your stretch workout. Hold your stretch position for at least 20 to 30 seconds before moving back to your original position.
- **Stretching Too Hard.** Stretching takes patience and finesse. Each move needs to be fluid and gentle. Don't throw your body into a stretch or try to rush through your stretching routine. Take your time and relax.

# Stretching**Tips**

- **Forgetting Form and Function.** Think about your sport or activity: Which muscles will you be using? A stretching routine for a 10K run will be very different from a routine for an hour of lifting weights. Pay attention to the muscles you need to use in your program and make sure your form for each stretch is attained properly. Consider the range of motion you'll be putting that particular muscle through. The whole point of stretching is getting your muscles accustomed to moving through a specific range of motion.

To avoid the stretch reflex and potential damage to your muscles and joints, avoid pain. Never push yourself beyond what is comfortable. Only stretch to the point where you can feel tension in your muscles (NOT PAIN). This way, you'll avoid injury and get the maximum benefits from your stretching.

Stretching is one of the most underutilized techniques for improving athletic performance, preventing sports injury and properly rehabilitating soft tissue injuries. Don't make the mistake of thinking that something as simple as stretching won't be effective. Take your time with your stretching routine, and later on you'll be grateful you did.

For more information about how to stretch properly, take a look at my popular article titled; [\*\*Good Stretch? Bad Stretch? How to Decide for Yourself\*\*](#)

# Stretching**Tips**

## Tip #2 - Don't Stretch an Injury

If you've neglected to incorporate stretching into your workout routine and have sustained an injury because of it, now is NOT the time to start stretching. That's like shutting the barn door after the horse has bolted. Once you've healed the muscle strain, ligament sprain or other soft tissue injury, you can start stretching, but definitely NOT while you're injured.

The moment you realize you've injured yourself, you'll need to take some steps to secure a full recovery. One of the most effective methods of initial treatment is R.I.C.E.R. (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation and Referral). Let's look at each step in detail:

- **R (Rest):** It's important that the injured area be kept as still as possible. This will help to slow down blood flow to that area of the body and prevent any further damage.
- **I (Ice):** This is by far the most important part. The application of ice will have the greatest effect on reducing bleeding, swelling and pain. Apply ice as soon as possible after the injury has occurred.
- **C (Compression):** Compression actually achieves two things. First, it helps to reduce both the bleeding and swelling around the injured area, and secondly, it provides support for the injury. Use a wide, firm, elastic compression bandage to cover the entire area.
- **E (Elevation):** Simply raise the injured area above the level of the heart at all possible times. This will help to further reduce the bleeding and swelling.

# Stretching**Tips**

- **R (referral):** If the injury is severe or debilitating, it's important that you consult a professional physical therapist or a qualified sports doctor for an accurate diagnosis. He or she will be able to tell you the full extent of the injury.

Whenever the R.I.C.E.R. regimen has been used immediately after the occurrence of an injury, it has been shown to significantly reduce recovery time. R.I.C.E.R. forms the first, and perhaps most important stage of injury rehabilitation, providing the early base for the complete recovery of an injury.

Remember; don't stretch an injury in the initial stages of the recovery process. Stick with the R.I.C.E.R. regimen for at least the first 48 to 72 hours.

For more information about how to treat soft tissue injuries properly, take a look at my comprehensive sports injury articles titled;

- [\*\*Pulled Muscles, Scar Tissue and Re-Injury\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Active Rehabilitation for a Complete Recovery\*\*](#)

# Stretching**Tips**

## **Tip #3 - Stretching and the Warm Up**

Have you ever tried to use an old, dried-up rubber band? You stretch it, but it has no elasticity, so it cracks and eventually snaps when pulled too far. Your muscles react in the same way.

Failing to warm up before exercising is like trying to use that old rubber band. Cold muscles are stiff and lack flexibility, so pushing them too far by jumping into exercise without a thorough warm up, could cause a serious injury.

### **What Does a Warm Up Do?**

Warming up prior to exercise does several beneficial things for your body. However, the primary benefit is that it allows your body and mind to get ready for the work ahead. When you go through a warm up routine, you're literally pre-heating your body, like pre-heating an oven. You're raising your core and muscle temperature by promoting blood flow through the muscles, making them loose and supple.

### **What Is the Correct Way to Warm Up?**

A good warm up does two things: It raises your heart rate and increases your respiratory rate, which increases blood flow and increases the amount of oxygen and nutrients delivered to the working muscles.

Remember, when you're working out, each step builds on the previous one. You warm up your body to prepare it for stretching, you stretch to prepare for the actual physical activity, you cool down to return your heart rate and breathing to normal, and finally, you do a last set of stretches to ease away the soreness and let your body know the workout is over.

# Stretching**Tips**

## **Your Warm Up Routine**

A good warm up routine is as simple as a few minutes of aerobic exercise. In most cases, it's best to warm up with a similar type of exercise you intend to do in the main part of your workout. Start at a leisurely pace with gentle exercise for 2 or 3 minutes and then accelerate to a more brisk pace for another couple of minutes. Your breathing should be deeper, but not to the point where you're totally out of breath. You should feel warm; maybe even break a light sweat.

Now you're ready for stretching. Use dynamic stretching or short hold (2 to 3 seconds) static stretching during this part of your warm up, and make sure you stretch each major muscle group and then focus on the muscle groups used in your particular activity.

Despite the extra time, your warm up routine is worth it. Taking the time to prepare your body for the strenuous activity ahead will enhance your performance, whether it means running that extra mile or lifting a few more sets of extra weight. You'll increase the blood flow to hungry muscles and tendons, and you'll greatly increase your range of motion. The muscles' reaction time gets a boost and the soreness associated with recovery soon becomes a thing of the past.

For a more detailed review of how to warm up properly and how to incorporate stretching into your warm up, take a look at my popular article; [Stretching and the Warm Up](#)

# Stretching**Tips**

## **Tip #4 - Stretch Before and After Exercise**

By now, you know stretching is a vital part of any workout routine. You've learned why stretching is important as well as how to warm up properly and avoid injury while stretching. One frequently asked question however is;

*“Should I stretch before or after I exercise?”*

The answer is: BOTH. This is not an either/or option; stretching both before and after physical activity is a must. And no cheating; stretching after exercise to get a jump on your next session will not do you any good either, and here is why:

The purpose of stretching before exercise is to help prevent injury. Stretching does this by lengthening the muscles and tendons, which in turn increases your range of movement. This helps you move freely without restriction or injury occurring. However, the reason why you stretch after exercise is very different.

### **Why Stretch After Exercise?**

Any strenuous activity, particularly weightlifting, causes a small amount of damage to the muscles and associated soft tissues. These small rips and tears are what force the muscles to grow when they begin the process of repairing themselves. Stronger tissue replaces the damaged tissue, which often causes soreness up to 48 hours after exercising. This is called delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS). You might not feel sore immediately following a workout, but think how many times you or someone else has said, “I'll pay for this later.”

# Stretching**Tips**

Stretching after exercise helps release the tension and prevents the muscles from becoming tight. Right after your workout, your muscles are warm and elastic. The post-workout stretching session affords you a second chance to loosen up those tight, tired muscles.

## **Is Stretching Considered Cooling Down?**

No, stretching and cooling down after a workout are two very different things. Some experts say you should cool down first and then stretch, and others say that stretching can be incorporated as part of the cool down process.

The purpose of cooling down is to help your heart rate return to normal. Your heart, lungs and blood flow all worked hard to get you through your workout, and without a sufficient cooling-down period, you may feel sick or dizzy. You might want to take a leisurely five-minute walk on a treadmill to relax your body and then do your stretching. Your muscles will still be warm and you'll still reap the benefits of a post-workout stretch.

For a more detailed review of how to cool down properly and how to incorporate stretching into your cool down, take a look at my article;

**[Stretching and the Cool Down](#)**

# Stretching**Tips**

## **Tip #5 - The Major Muscle Groups**

By now, you understand the important role stretching plays in a well-rounded exercise or training routine. You've learned how to avoid injury by combining a warm up with stretching to prime your body for the rigors of training. You know how to do it and, more importantly, you know why you should do it.

Although stretching specific muscle groups for your particular activity is important, you cannot neglect all of the major muscle groups. Just because your particular sport may place a lot of emphasis on the legs, for example, does not mean that you can neglect the muscles of your upper body. That's like the case of a bodybuilder who does nothing but focus only on the muscles he can see in the mirror. Doing so throws the whole body out of balance, and once again you risk serious injury.

All of your muscle groups come into play when you exercise, whether you realize it or not. When you run, your upper body lends stability and balance to your movements, and when swimming or playing tennis, your legs are as important to proper form as your arms.

### **Opposites Work Together**

Every muscle (agonist) in the body has an opposing muscle (antagonist) that acts against it. For example, the muscles in the front of the legs, (the quadriceps) are opposed by the muscles in the back of the legs, (the hamstrings). These two groups of muscles provide a resistance to each other to balance the body. If one of these groups become stronger or more flexible than the opposing group, it's likely to lead to imbalances that can result in injury or postural problems.

# Stretching**Tips**

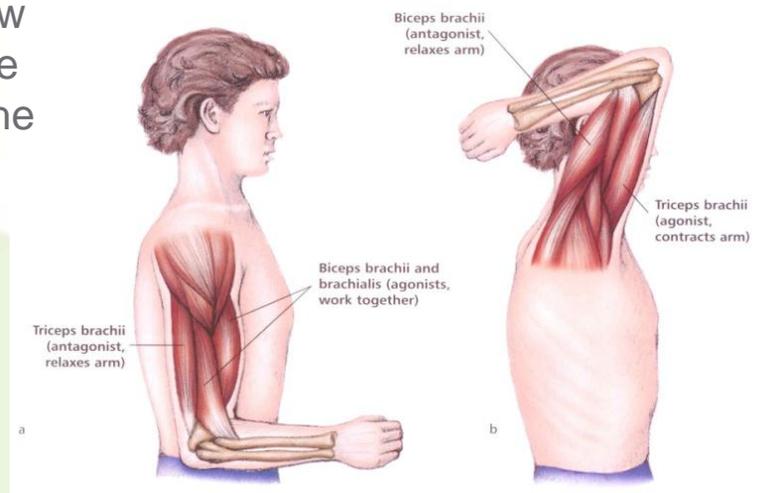
Hamstring tears for example, are common injuries in most running sports. They often arise from strong quadriceps and weak, inflexible hamstrings. This imbalance puts a great deal of pressure on the hamstrings and can result in a muscle tear. The same applies to the arms; biceps at the front versus triceps at the back.

The diagram to the right shows how the Biceps brachii in the front of the arm is opposed by the Triceps in the back of the arm.

Some of the major muscle groups that work to balance your body and provide good posture are:

- Chest and upper back
- Biceps and triceps
- Abdominals and lower back
- Quadriceps and hamstrings (front and back of the upper legs)
- Groin and abductors (inside and outside of the upper legs)
- Shins and calves (front and back of the lower legs)

As always, thoroughly warm up and stretch only to the point of tension. Do not force yourself to go past the stretch reflex and avoid bouncing. Remember to hold each stretch for at least 20 to 30 seconds before moving on to the next stretch.



# Stretching**Tips**

## **Tip #6 - Be Aware of Your Posture**

To excel in any sport and reap its maximum benefits, you need to have a solid foundation built on perfect form. Many people take posture for granted, and like breathing, they rarely consider it when exercising. The same is true when it comes to stretching. You've already learned so much, and now you need to refine your stretching technique. Bad posture and incorrect technique can cause imbalances in the muscles, which in turn lead to injury.

### **Check Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself**

Many of the major muscle groups are exactly that; groups. Each group comprises several smaller groups that connect to other groups. If your form is incorrect, you may impact more than one body part. Like an avalanche set in motion by the smallest ball of snow, your whole body can be thrown off balance by sloppy or incorrect posture.

For example, let us consider stretching the hamstrings (the long muscles at the back of the upper legs). Proper form for this stretch means keeping your feet pointing straight forward or, if you're on the floor, keeping your feet and toes pointing straight up. When your feet point off at different angles, you put undue stress on other areas of the legs.

The picture on the next page shows the difference between good posture and bad posture. Note the athlete on the left; feet upright and back relatively straight. The athlete on the right is at a greater risk of causing a muscular imbalance that may lead to injury.

# Stretching**Tips**



## **Fact and Fiction**

One of the most common misconceptions about stretching is that it cannot cause injury or be done incorrectly. Wrong! Poor posture or technique will cause serious injuries, and neglecting proper form in any aspect of your regimen could seriously set back your training.

Take your time when you stretch, move gently and treat your muscles with care. If you feel pain, then stop. You should be as serious about your stretching as you are about the sport or activity you pursue.

No matter what sport or physical activity you take part in, stretching should be an important part of that routine. Do not underestimate the power and benefits that stretching offers. If you take the time to stretch properly, you'll not only increase and enhance your performance but also avoid serious injury later on.

For more detailed information on how to stretch, when to stretch and stretching properly, take a look at my article; [How to Stretch Properly](#)

# Stretching**Tips**

## **Tip #7 - Breathing and Stretching**

Breathing during any form of exercise is often taken for granted. We breathe all the time and often underestimate how much the way we breathe helps during our exercise routines. Many people make the mistake of unconsciously holding their breath when doing a strenuous activity. This in turn causes unwanted tension in the muscles, making the activity that much harder. Stretching is no exception.

### **Why Breathe?**

Breathing properly promotes blood flow and increases the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to your muscles. Breathing slowly and easily also helps to relax your muscles, which makes stretching easier and more beneficial. When your body is relaxed, your stretching becomes easier. Stretching is then safe, and when you're stretching safely, you're gaining the most benefits from your stretching routine.

### **Learning to Breathe**

If you haven't been breathing properly during stretching or other physical activities, it might seem a little awkward at first. Once you learn how to breathe properly, the process becomes second nature. The whole trick to breathing properly, is knowing when to breathe in (inhale) and when to breathe out (exhale).

The easiest way to remember how to breathe during a stretch is to exhale as you're moving into the stretch and inhale as you return to your original position. For example, try doing a simple leg stretch. Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front and try to reach towards your toes while inhaling. It's not very easy, is it? Now, try the stretch again as

# Stretching**Tips**

you exhale. You'll find that as you release the air from your lungs, you can stretch a lot farther.

Exhaling occurs whenever you're moving weight. Sometimes it's away from your body (as with leg presses or push-ups) and sometimes it's towards your body (as with bicep curls or lateral pull-downs). This is the same during a stretch; your body is the weight you're moving. When you move into the stretch, you're moving the weight of your body, so you should breathe out. As your muscles return to their original positions, you should breathe in.

If you get confused in the beginning, that's all right. The important thing to remember is to breathe no matter what. Holding your breath will not help you at all, and you'll find yourself tiring faster.

# Stretching**Tips**

## Conclusion

Thanks for your interest in my free publication; Stretching Tips! I hope you've gained some valuable tips, tricks and tactics to help you get more out of your time spent stretching.

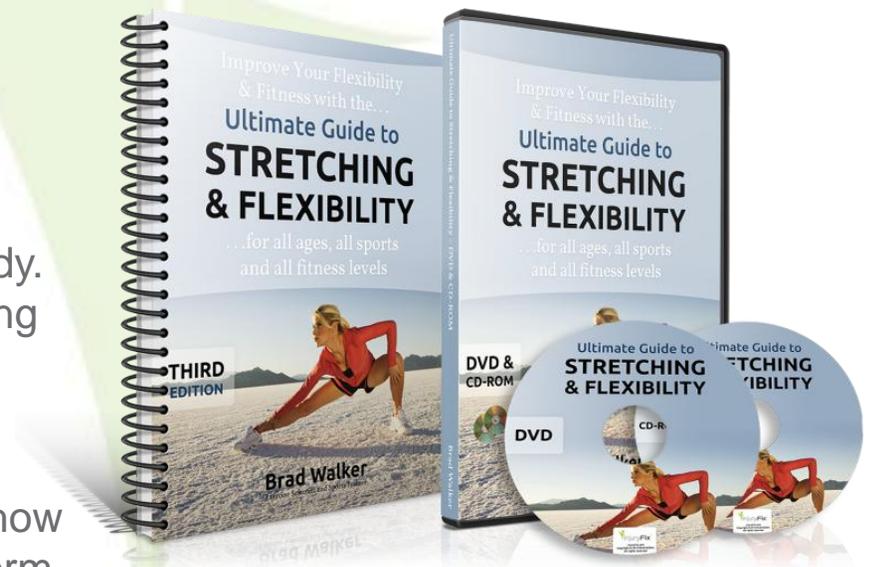
While the recommendations in this eBook are a good starting point, you'll get a lot more benefit when you include a wider variety of stretches in your workout routines. So to improve your athletic ability, reduce injuries and really take advantage of all the stretching exercises on offer, grab a copy of the Ultimate Guide to Stretching & Flexibility (Handbook, DVD & CD-ROM).

In total, they include 135 clear photographs and 44 video demonstrations of unique stretching exercises for every major muscle group in your body. Plus, over 80 printable stretching routines for 22 sports and 19 different muscle groups.

The Handbook and DVD will show you, step-by-step, how to perform each stretch correctly. Check out the [Ultimate Guide to Stretching & Flexibility](#) for yourself.

Please feel free to send a copy of Stretching Tips! to your friends and family members, and encourage them to visit my website at...

[StretchCoach.com](http://StretchCoach.com)



# Stretching**Tips**

If I can assist you in the future with any stretching, flexibility or sports injury concerns, please just ask. And if you have a question that you need help with, please [contact me here](#).

Yours in health,

*BRAD WALKER*

*Brad Walker*

*The Stretch Coach*

