

Name: _____

Block: _____

Date: ___/___/___

FITNESS HOMEWORK : Flexibility Workout

How to Do Stretching Exercises Safely

Warm Up Before Stretching

It used to be that people thought they should stretch before any other part of their workout. However, research has shown that it is better to stretch muscles once they are already warmed up. This is true for all kinds of stretching - static, dynamic, and PNF. Light stretching can happen after the initial warm-up phase of a workout and more intensive stretching can follow a workout. A good warm-up reflects the types of movements that are going to be performed later.

Increase Your Range of Motion

Your joints have certain directions in which they will allow more movement than others. Your leg will bend forward at the hip more readily than it will bend back, for example. Respect your body's limitations. That said, you do want to take advantage of the full range of motion that is naturally available. So, be sure to stretch all muscle groups, and make sure that you are stretching in all directions - gently exploring and testing the full range of a joint.

How developed your muscles are will play a part in how flexible you are. When muscles are over-developed there is almost always a reduction in flexibility. At the same time, some muscles may be weak from under-use. Certain sports and chronic injuries are known for creating this situation, which is also associated with instability at the joints, loss of range of motion, and uneven mobility.

Choose Stretching Exercises Wisely

Static stretching is safe and effective. It will help you be more flexible. Most forms of yoga are dramatic examples of the benefits of static stretching. However, research shows that a lot of static stretching before working out (running in this case) may reduce muscular efficiency. Those who are preparing their muscles for intensive exertion -- a demanding sport, for example -- may want to try dynamic stretching, which some people believe is a better way to warm-up. Most importantly, don't bounce. Bouncing in a stretch is an old-fashioned, unsafe practice that can produce a shortening response in muscles.

Pilate's exercises are typically more dynamic than static. They are performed with the six Pilates principles of movement - centering, concentration, control, precision, breath, and flow - which keep them moving along in a safe way. Pilates is also an example of a method of exercise that is focused on uniform development of the muscles and avoiding any kind of over development that limits flexibility. There is, in Pilates, a considerable focus on joint stability and integrity, and you rarely see the floppy, rag doll kind of flexibility that some forms of exercise promote. The intensity and pace of Pilate's exercises can be adjusted to the needs of the moment, generally increasing in intensity of stretch and range of motion as the workout proceeds and fitness levels increase.

Assignment – Physical – 30 min. Flexibility workout of your choice.

Activity: _____

Parent Signature (Required): _____

I participated with my child: Yes _____ (.5 extra credit) No _____

1) Why is it important to warm up before you exercise?

2) How does increasing your range of motion help you and why is this important?

3) What are the two flexibility exercises discussed up above and how are they different from one another?