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# Upper Body Stretches

## WHAT IT IS

Stretching is the act of improving and maintaining flexibility, which is the ability to move a joint or joints smoothly and easily through a full range of motions. Stretches should be held for 20-30 seconds and performed during or after a light warm-up and again during cool-down.

## BENEFITS OF STRETCHING

- Enhanced physical fitness
- Increased mental and physical relaxation
- Reduced risk of injury to joints, muscles, and tendons
- Reduced muscular soreness
- Reduced muscular tension
- Improved performance

## WHEN TO STRETCH

Stretching can be done at any time, but is especially important during the warm-up before activities and the cool-down afterward.

**Warming up** is the process of raising the core body temperature. Warming up can be achieved by performing some form of aerobic activity using large muscle groups, such as biking or jogging. Stretching is NOT synonymous with warming up, but should be incorporated into the warming-up process. During warm-up, it is most appropriate to do dynamic stretches that mimic the motions you will be performing during activity.

After a workout, a **cool-down** period is essential. This enables the body to gradually cool and return to its resting state. The importance of this is often ignored, but people who stretch during this period often experience fewer problems with muscle soreness after strenuous activity. The stretches on this sheet work well as part of your cool down or when used at other times throughout the day.

## STRETCHING EXERCISES

### Wrist Extension



Gently extend the wrist while keeping the elbow straight.

### Wrist Flexion



Gently flex the wrist while keeping the elbow straight.

### Tricep



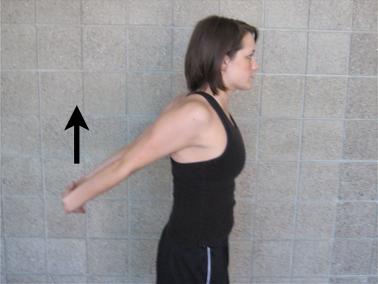
Pull one arm up and behind head. Fingers should be reaching towards the middle of the back. Place free hand on opposite elbow to assist with stretch.

### Pec



Stand in a doorway with arm at a 90 degree angle. Rotate your body away from the arm being stretched.

## STRETCHING EXERCISES

| Shoulder Extension   | Horizontal Adduction  | External Rotation  | Internal Rotation   | Sleeper Stretch  |
|--|---|--|---|--|
|   |    |    |    |   |
| <p>Grasp both hands behind your back and try to lift your hands up toward your head as high as you can while keeping your back straight.</p> | <p>Act like you are trying to grab your opposite shoulder. Then grab your elbow with your other hand and pull across your body.</p> | <p>Place a towel in your right hand and then put the right arm up and behind the head. Grab the other end of the towel with your left hand and pull down gently.</p> | <p>Place a towel in your left hand and then put the left hand up and behind the head. Grab the other end of the towel with your right hand. Pull up gently.</p> | <p>Lie on your side with your shoulder raised to 90 degrees. Pull down on your hand, stretching out the back of your shoulder.</p> |
| Mid Back/Rhomboid  | Neck Flexion  | Neck Extension   | Neck Lateral Flexion  | Neck Rotation  |
|    |   |   |   |    |
| <p>Extend arms out in front of body and clasp hands together. Round the shoulders while pushing forward with the hands.</p>                  | <p>Pull chin toward chest.</p>  | <p>Lean your head back, looking up toward the ceiling with your jaw closed.</p>  | <p>Place hand across head and slowly bring ear to shoulder.</p>   | <p>Rotate your head as if you were trying to look over your shoulder.</p>  |

### BREATHING DURING STRETCHING

Proper breathing is important for a successful stretch. Many people make the mistake of holding their breath while stretching, but remembering to breathe helps to relax the blood flow throughout the body and helps to mechanically remove the lactic acid and other byproducts of exercise.

### Injury Prevention & Care - A Campus Recreation Program

<http://crec.unl.edu/ipcare>

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