



## Fitness Tip -- Improving Muscular Balance and Joint Flexibility

A key component to successful training is staying healthy and incorporating balance. What is often overlooked is **stretching to improve muscular balance and joint flexibility**. As the song goes, *the hip bone is connected to the thigh bone, the thigh bone is connected to the leg bone....*

Walking performance isn't just a matter of hard training; it should also include attention to nutrition, muscular strength, and **flexibility**. A tight muscle is an inefficient muscle. It cannot elongate and contract quickly to make a joint move or function within its full range of motion. When a muscle's range of movement is restricted, that muscle becomes weaker and more prone to injury. Power is the combination of strength and flexibility.

Do you recognize the need to minimally stretch the muscles of your legs? What about the rest of your body? Tension in the lower back, shoulders, chest or neck can constrict breathing, which impacts the flow of oxygen to working muscles. A tight upper body can adversely affect walking posture, and inhibit the smooth flow of forward movement. Tightness in the hamstring muscles and Achilles tendons, along with weak abdominal muscles, can cause serious back problems. Inflexible upper body muscles can disrupt the coordination between arms and legs. Stretching lengthens these tissues and restores their range of motion and flexibility. Just 10 minutes a day of stretching exercises may prevent injury.

As you walk, your body makes thousands of adjustments or adaptations from head to foot. The body seeks balance and has an incredible capacity to adapt and adapt and adapt until it can adapt no more, resulting in frustration and / or injury. For the process of walking to be repeated efficiently, the musculoskeletal system must be remarkably well-coordinated above the waist as well as below. Without a well-functioning upper body, it is impossible to develop a well-functioning lower body.

### Stretching Guidelines

Here are a few rules for stretching. First warm up by walking a few minutes so that the muscles are somewhat loose. Muscle, tendon, and ligament elasticity depends on the presence of warm blood. Cold connective tissues are more susceptible to damage. Never bounce while stretching and do not stretch to the point where you feel pain. This could cause muscle tissues to tear. Make sure you feel the stretch in the muscle not in the joints. The key to developing good flexibility is to relax, hold each stretch where you feel a slight pull for 15 - 20 seconds. Relax totally, stretch again for 15 - 30 seconds. (Only a relaxed muscle will allow itself to be stretched.) It is ok to stretch daily and during the day. I encourage you doing do so.

Flexibility is an individual matter. "Make the most of where you are" -- genetics is a factor, too.