



## Gensel Wellness Center

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# Make It Permanent -Flexibility-

This month we will address the flexibility component in exercise. Your exercise program should consist of 3 components: aerobic, strength training and flexibility. Aerobic exercise consists of any exercise that challenges your cardiovascular system for a sustained period of time. This would include running, jogging, walking, biking, elliptical trainer, etc. Be sure to read our October 2008 Newsletter for more details on Aerobic Exercise.

One of the most over looked parts of a workout program is warm up and flexibility. A warm up that includes stretching should always be performed before your workout. Many people skip their warm up and stretching routine to head straight to their aerobic workout. Next time you think about skipping your warm up ask yourself, "do I take 3 minutes today or 3 months tomorrow?". Stretching is VERY important when it comes to injury prevention, balancing muscle groups, improving physical performance, reduction of muscle soreness, and improving posture. If you don't take a few minutes today to warm up before exercise (aerobic or strength training), you may be taking 3 months to recover from a muscle strain that's likely to happen! To warm up prior to exercise, do some fast-paced walking or light jogging for 5-10 minutes. Then, go to an area where you have room to stretch and follow the stretching routine in this newsletter. For a warm up, do 2-3 sets of each exercise, holding the position for a count of 10 seconds. Do not bounce!

In order to *improve* your flexibility, you need to do an additional stretching routine to your normal warm up routine. One thing to be conscious of is to compare your flexibility bi-laterally. For example, does your left hamstring (the muscle in the back of your thigh) feel tighter than the other? This can be a sign of muscle imbalance which leads to increased injury, wear and tear and joint inflammation. This could come from structural imbalances in your body. Visiting your Chiropractor can help to correct these structural imbalances.

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Don't ignore these warnings signs. It's best to correct these structural misalignments as soon as possible. A simple, pain free adjustment is all it takes!

Did you know your diet could hurt your flexibility? Dehydration, white sugar, soda, and caffeine all have links to making tendons, ligaments and muscle less flexible. Don't cut your fat too low! You need good healthy fats from foods like olive oil, coconut oil, avocados, nuts and seeds to keep cells, joints, and skin lubricated.

Included in this newsletter is a good overall stretching routine that should be implemented at least 3 times per week. It should take you no more than 10-15 minutes to do this routine. The optimal time to do a stretching routine to *increase* flexibility is to take time after your workout when your muscles are already warm. If you don't have time after your workout, you may try doing a stretching routine in the evening after soaking in a hot bath.

All exercises should be held for 10 seconds and repeated at least 3 times.  
**If you have any back problems, please consult with your doctor before attempting these exercises.**

### **Legs (performed in the following order)**

#### Hamstring (back of the thigh)

#1: on the floor, legs straight out in front, lower your nose to your knees, keep your back straight, do not bounce.

#2: on the floor, on your back, keeping the back flat, eyes focused upward, one leg bent with the foot on the floor and the other leg straight up, grasp the back of the leg that is in the air with both your hands, pull that thigh towards your chest keeping the leg straight as possible.

#### Gastrocnemius & Soleus (calf muscles)

Standing, facing a wall, toes touching the wall, both palms against the wall, take the leg you want to stretch back several feet from the wall, press your heel to the floor, your other leg is flexed about halfway between your back leg and the wall. When you're finished with this exercise, stay in the same position but lower your knee to the ground...this stretches the soleus portion of the calf muscle.

#### Quadriceps (front of the thigh)

On the floor or standing, grab the ankle or toe of one of your feet, pull your heel to your buttock keeping the front of both thighs parallel, back straight.

#### Adductors (groin muscle)

Butterfly stretch: sitting up on the floor, back straight, shoulders down, soles of the feet together in front of you, knees bent to the sides, pull your heels towards you while relaxing your knees towards the floor...you can apply light pressure to your knees/thighs with your elbows to push your knees to the floor.

### **Hips**

#### Hip / Gluteus Stretch

Laying on your back, cross left foot over right knee, clasp hands behind right thigh and gently pull the leg in towards you, keeping the left knee pushed away from your body. You want to feel the stretch in your hip area. Switch Legs

#### Hip Flexor Lunge Stretch

On your knees, lunge forward with your right foot, gently press your hips forward until you feel a stretch in the front of the leg/hip. Keep you back straight. Switch legs.

### **Back**

#### Knees to Chest

Lying on the floor, pull your knees into your chest and clasp your hands under your knees. Gently press your hips to the floor.

### **Arms & Chest**

#### Triceps stretch (back of your arm)

Bend the left elbow behind your head with the left hand trying to touch between your shoulder blades, use the right hand to gently pull the left elbow in further until you feel a stretch in the back of your arm. Switch sides and repeat.

#### Chest and Biceps Stretch

Individual chest stretch - stand next with one should next to a wall, take the arm that's touching the wall and extend back and parallel with the floor, twist your body away from the wall with a special emphasis on pushing your chest through the turn, so that you feel the stretch in your chest.

Federal Law requires that we warn you of the following:

1. The information provided in this article is for educational purposes only.

2. Your individual health status and any required health care treatments can only be properly addressed by a professional healthcare provider of your choice.

Remember: There is no adequate substitution for a personal consultation with your chosen health care provider. Therefore, we encourage you to make your own health care decisions based upon your research and in partnership with a qualified health care professional.

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