

## How to Improve Flexibility

It's important to have good flexibility so you don't injure yourself. This does not just apply to athletes; anyone can hurt themselves if they happen to move the wrong way and overstretch a tight muscle. Increasing flexibility isn't hard but it doesn't happen overnight. You have to keep at it until you reach your goal and then stretch on a regular basis to keep yourself at that level.



- Flexibility -



### Steps

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- 1** The very first thing you must do before stretching is a warm up jog, run, or bike to get loose.
- 2** **Stretch as much as possible.** You will become more limber as your muscles become longer. Do some traditional slow stretches after you do Dynamic stretches, extending your limbs until you feel the stretch.
- 3** **Dynamic stretch should be done before static stretches.** Dynamic stretches consist of moving lunges, knee raises, straight leg march and lastly heal to butt. To do Lunges take a step forward making sure that your back leg is straight and front leg is bent at a 90-degree angle; alternate between legs while making sure your back is straight. To do Knee rises walk but you alternate between lifting each leg up and pulling it to your chest. To do straight leg march walk while kicking your legs straight up. Heal to Butt is simple and easy to do walk and alternate pulling your foot to your butt. In all of these you want to make sure you feel a nice stretch while moving. Posture and good form is key to success.
- 4** **Swing your arms and legs through their full range of motion.** Take care to only swing as far as your muscles will comfortably allow. This is called dynamic stretching; the muscles will stretch a little farther each time until you reach your full range of motion. It can take quite a while to reach this point and this activity should be reserved for those who already have some flexibility.
- 5** **Inhale deeply as you begin your stretch.** As you exhale, you can relax into the stretch, allowing the muscle to lengthen more and thus increase flexibility.

6 **Try the contract-relax method.** You can do this alone or assisted. Move into a stretch, then release for a moment and contract the muscles in the area. Release the contraction and relax the muscles while moving into the stretch again. You should be able to stretch a little farther with each repetition. If you have assistance, instruct the person to push your limb lightly into the stretch to help your muscle lengthen more.

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7 **Get a massage.** Deep muscle techniques like neuromuscular, Rolfing and myofascial release are designed to get rid of problems in your body that can reduce flexibility. Only go to a massage therapist who is trained in these modalities because injury could occur if the therapist doesn't know exactly what she's doing. A standard massage can help as well, since it will improve circulation to the muscles, allowing them to repair any damage.

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8 **Do some yoga, Pilates or martial arts.** These activities encourage building lean muscle while maintaining flexibility.

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9 **Hot tube or warm baths can also help with keeping your muscles relaxed.**

## Video

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2GgP3hkZHU>

## Tips

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- Always warm up and cool down, even if you haven't done any exercise. Your muscles will become more limber when they are warm and the risk of pulling something is lower. One possible warm-up activity is rotating your joints (e.g. shoulder rolls).
- Hold stretches 45 seconds to a minute to really make progress.
- Also when stretching it is important not to force the stretch for example bouncing back and forth trying to touch your toes.
- When doing lunges make sure your front bent leg and back straight leg are aligned as you lunge.
- Different sports require different stretches.

## Sources and Citations

[edit](#)

- <http://www.tailored-fitness-home-workouts.com/stretchingandflexibility.html>
- [http://www.cmcrossroads.com/bradapp/docs/rec/stretching/stretching\\_5.html](http://www.cmcrossroads.com/bradapp/docs/rec/stretching/stretching_5.html)
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