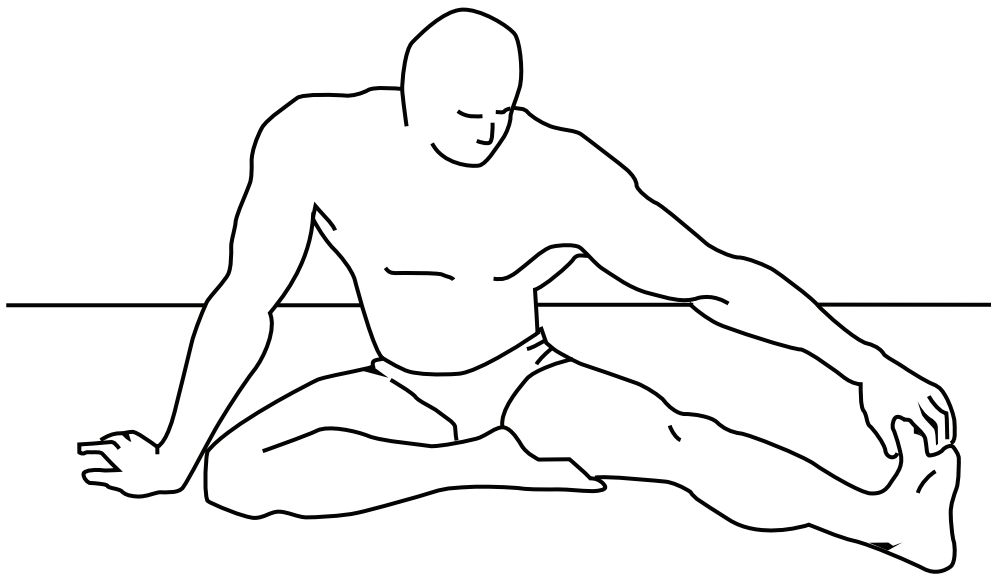


Stretching for Young Athletes



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Sports and exercise are usually integral parts of many adolescents life. Whether they play at school or in recreational leagues, the competition can be very intense. Sometimes, both the players and coaches forget about warming up before games especially in recreational leagues. the lack of warm-up can lead to possible injuries that could be serious. One aspect of warm-up that could be helpful is having players stretch before and after the games. It is important for the coaches to realize the importance of stretching and warming up and to have the team stretch as a unit. Another important aspect to stretching is for coaches to stress the importance to their players. The athletes themselves should stretch before and after the games and whenever they workout. Many times the athletes are not familiar with various stretches they can do for the different muscles in their body. So it is important for the coaches to educate their athletes on the stretches they can do. They also should be educated on how to properly stretch because improper technique can cause an injury and is less effective in try to keep an individual loose.

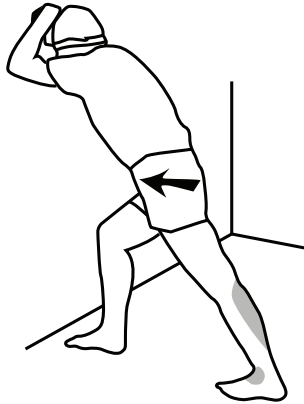
There has been quite a bit of research that has been done to look at the effects of warm-up and stretching. There are studies that suggest that warm-up and stretching are beneficial while others would say that they offer no benefit. In a study conducted by Rodenburg, Steenbeek, Schiereck, and Bar; they examined the effects of the combination of warm-up, stretching, and massage on delayed onset of muscular soreness (DOMS) and the functional and bio-mechanical changes associated with it. The researchers found that this combination resulted in a decrease in delayed onset of muscular soreness (DOMS) when the arm was being extended. Another study that was conducted looked at sports stretching and its effect on muscle stiffness in short hamstrings. The researchers determined that stretching did not affect the passive muscle stiffness but did increase passive range of motion and extensibility of the hamstrings.

In the pages to follow, there is a comprehensive stretching program that encompasses exercise for various muscles throughout the body. These stretching activities are ones that can be done by the athlete themselves and no equipment is needed to perform them. These activities can be preformed on the field, on the court, or in the locker room. The stretching should be preformed both before and after playing in a sporting event. Three repetitions of each stretching activity should be completed and held for 30 seconds.

LEG STRETCHES

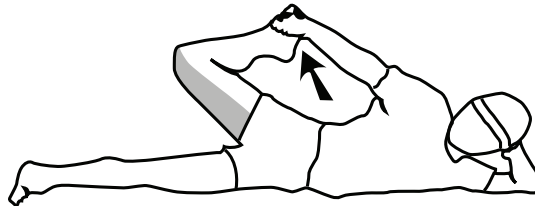
Gastrocnemius/Soleus (Calf) Stretch:

Stand with one foot forward with the knee bent and the opposite foot behind you completely straight. Then lean forward allowing your front knee to continue to bend. Make sure you keep your back leg straight. A slight stretch should be felt in the lower part of your leg or calf.

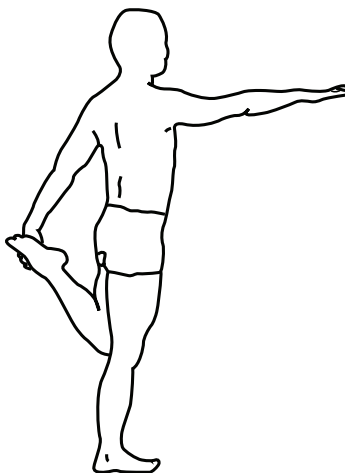


Quadriceps (Thigh) Stretches:

Lying on your side, bend your top knee back behind you. Then reach back with the hand on the same side as the bent leg and grab your foot or ankle. Gently pull back and you should feel a slight stretch in the thigh portion of your leg.

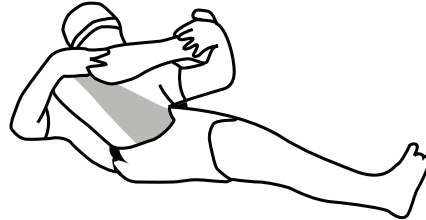


While in standing, bend one leg up behind you. Grab your foot with the hand on the same side as the foot you bent up. Pull your leg back until your knee is pointing toward the ground. Then pull your foot up toward your back and you should feel a slight stretch in your thigh. If you pull your leg a little further behind you, you should feel a stretch in the front part of your hip and upper thigh.

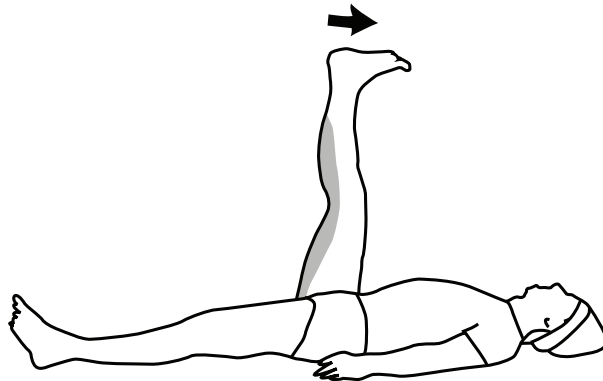


Hamstring (back of Thigh) Stretches:

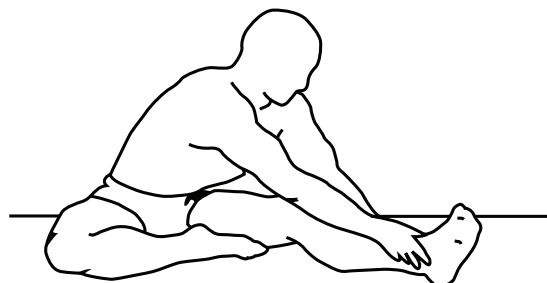
Lying on your back, bend your leg up toward your chest. Then grab a hold of your leg at the knee and the ankle and turn the leg toward the opposite shoulder. You should feel a slight stretch in the lower and outer portion of the back of your thigh.



Lying on your back, lift your leg straight up until you feel a slight stretch in the back of your thigh or knee. You can alter the position shown by placing your hands behind your knee with your knee bent and your thigh up in the air. Then extend your lower leg until you feel a slight stretch in the back of your thigh or knee.

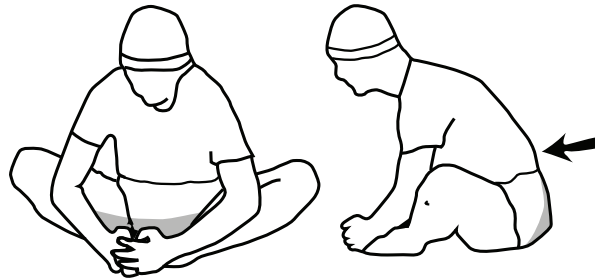


Sitting on the ground/floor, straighten out one leg and bend the other so that your foot touches the leg that is straight out. Lean forward and reach toward your foot. You should feel a slight stretch in the back of your thigh or knee. **MAKE SURE YOU KEEP YOUR BACK STRAIGHT.**



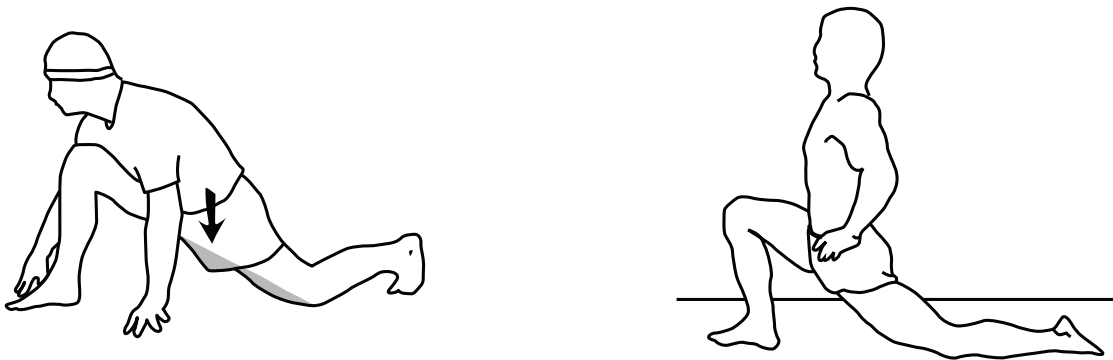
Adductor (Inner Thigh) Stretch:

Place your feet together in sitting. Then hold onto them with your hands and bring them closer toward you. Then press down your legs with your your arms and lean forward slightly and you should feel a slight stretch in your groin. **MAKE SURE YOU KEEP YOUR BACK STRAIGHT.**

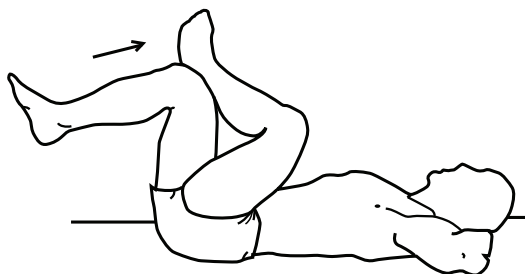


Hip Flexor/Quadriceps (Upper Thigh/Front of Hip) Stretch:

Spread your legs apart so that one leg is in front of you and the other is behind you. Bend your knees so that your back knee is touching the ground. Then reach your leg back leg further behind you. Then push your weight down toward the ground/floor and lean slightly forward with your trunk. You should feel a slight stretch in the front of your hip and thigh. (Two views)

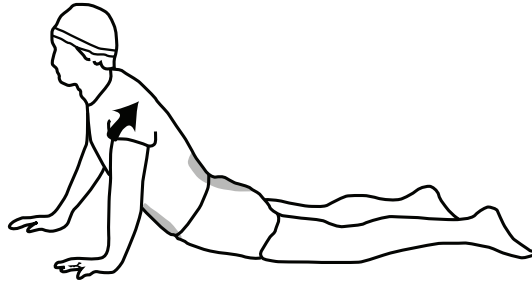


Lying on your back, bend both of your knees so that your feet are flat on the ground. Then lift one leg and cross it over the other that is still bent. Your knee should be pointing opposite of the direction of your body. Then bring your other leg up toward your chest while the opposite leg is on top of it. You should feel a slight stretch in your buttocks and possibly in the upper portion on the back of your thigh.

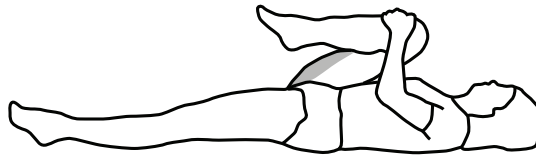


LOWER BACK STRETCHES

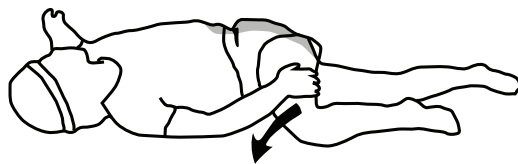
Lying on your stomach, place your hands on the ground as if you are going to perform a push-up. Then push your upper body off the ground/floor with your lower body staying on the ground/floor. Your lower back should arch and a slight stretch should be felt in the lower back and/or abdomen.



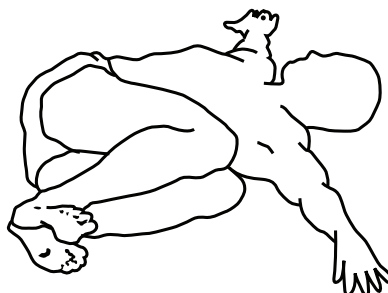
Lying on your back, bring your knee toward your chest. Place your hands on top of your knee or lower leg. Pull your knee closer to your chest until you feel a slight stretch in the back of your thigh or lower back.



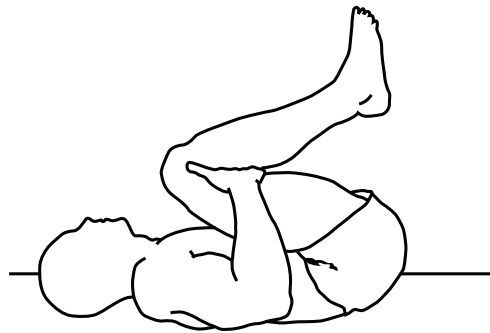
Lying on your back, turn your legs to the side. Reach your top leg further over with it bent at the knee. Then press down on the top leg at the knee with your hand until you feel a slight stretch at your hip and/or lower back. Turn and stretch the other side.



Lying on your back, bend your knees up so that your feet are flat on the ground/floor. Then rotate your waist so that your legs turn to the side staying together. You should feel a slight stretch in the lower portion of your back. Turn and stretch the other side.

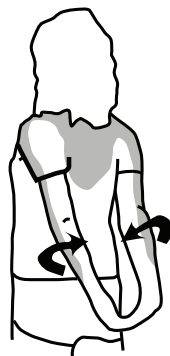


Lying on your back, bend your knees up toward your chest. Then grab behind your knees and pull them closer to you until you feel a slight stretch in your lower back.

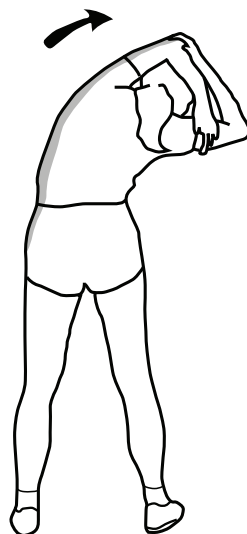


ARM STRETCHES

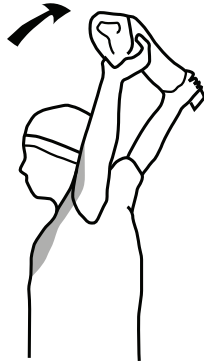
Reach behind your back with both arms. Interlock your hands and fingers. Then turn your arms inward and pull your shoulders back. You should feel your shoulder blades squeezing together and a slight pull in the front part of your shoulder and/or chest.



Reach your arms behind your head and grab the bottom arm with the top one. Then gently pull the bottom arm toward the side opposite of that arm. While you are doing that, lean toward the opposite side of the arm you are pulling on. You should feel a slight stretch in the back of the arm being pulled and along your side.



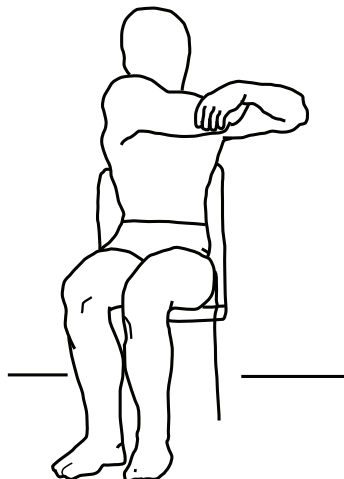
Roll up a towel. Then hold it in both hands and raise it up above your head. Then gently bring it further behind your head with your arms completely straight until you feel a slight stretch in your chest and arm.



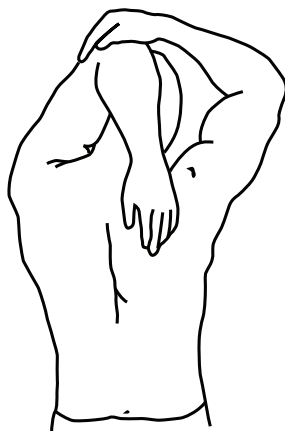
Reach your arms and hand above your head. Your arms should be just behind your head. Cross your arms at the wrist and put your hands together, palm to palm. You should feel a slight stretch in your arms and maybe some in your neck.



This stretch can be performed in sitting or in standing. Reach across your body and grab your other arm just behind your elbow. Pull your arm back across your body. You should feel a slight stretch on the back of your arms and shoulder.



Reach your arm straight above your head. Then bend your arm at the elbow so that your hand is behind your head and you are touching your back. Then reach over your head with your opposite arm and place your hand on your elbow. Then push gently down toward the floor. You should feel a slight stretch in your shoulder.



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