

Performance 101: Why We Stretch

The purpose of stretching is to increase muscle flexibility and joint range of motion. Stretching activities are an important part of any exercise or rehabilitation program. They help warm the body up prior to activity thus decreasing the risk of injury as well as muscle soreness. The benefits of stretching are many and have been proven through various studies over time.

Some of the Benefits of Stretching

Increased flexibility and joint range of motion:

Flexible muscles can improve your daily performance. Tasks such as getting into a 3 point stance, bending to make a tackle or hurrying to catch a 60 yd touchdown pass become easier and less tiring.

Improved circulation:

Stretching increases blood flow to your muscles. Blood flowing to your muscles brings nourishment and gets rid of waste byproducts in the muscle tissue. Improved circulation can help shorten your recovery time if you've had any muscle injuries.

Better posture:

Frequent stretching can help keep your muscles from getting tight, allowing you to maintain proper posture. Good posture can minimize discomfort and keep aches and pains at a minimum. Quite often during our warm-up I stress for you all to stay in a low position and maintain proper posture, the ability to maintain this posture while being in an athletic position is imperative to being a successful athlete.

Stress relief:

Stretching relaxes tight, tense muscles that often accompany stress.

Enhanced coordination:

Maintaining the full range-of-motion through your joints keeps you in better balance. Coordination and balance will help keep you mobile and less prone to injury. This is the biggest benefit to athletes. The greater the communication between your CNS (central nervous system) and your muscles, the more power you can generate. The better coordination the stronger and faster you can become.

As you can see, stretching is an important component to your overall performance. The more flexible you can become, the more power, speed and agility you can improve. If you're training regime doesn't focus on the benefits of flexibility, than you are only hindering your performance.

Trainer's Table: Fuel for Performance

A big topic the past couple of weeks from coaches, parents, and players has been what to eat before practice. For many of you finding time to eat a proper breakfast before a 6 am practice is a challenge (remember: sacrifice). Not eating anything can be your worse decision. The truth is if you don't properly fuel your performance, you might as well not show up. I talked before that you can train as hard as you can, but if you don't properly fuel your body you are never going to see the benefits. Those of you who participated in Elite's Provincial Conditioning Camps this winter, had the opportunity to hear from Jeff Fisher the importance of nutrition and training. Jeff creates specific nutritional programs for every single client at Elite and knows the importance of fueling your workouts. Performance starts with nutrition.

Example of a good breakfast before practice:

A good source of lean protein - Eggs, Egg Whites, Whey Protein, Milk, Peanut butter, Yogurt
Complex Carbs- non-refined carbohydrates, that the body slowly digests over time; Oatmeal, Whole Wheat bread, Shredded Wheat, Whole Wheat Pancakes (stay away from the syrup though)

A good source of fat- Peanut Butter, Nuts and Seeds, Yogurt

WATER- we talked about this before

Other- stay away from anything fried, and remember a McDonalds or Tim's breakfast isn't a good substitute. The amount of chemicals, and preservatives in those "foods" will cause you to crash half way through your camp.

Again, it's not a very tough list to follow. The biggest problem is giving yourself enough time to eat. This usually means getting up 20 minutes earlier than before. Is 20 minutes really a sacrifice in order to give your best performance? Players take some responsibility and don't rely on your parents to have to wake you up and make your meals. You are all old enough to do this yourselves!

Coach Harper

"What am I willing to sacrifice for what I want to become"

Matt Harper

Strength & Conditioning Specialist

Elite Football Academy Director

University of Manitoba Bison Football Strength Coach

Football Manitoba Provincial Program Strength & Conditioning Coordinator

matt@elitewinnipeg.com

(204) 831-6758

