



HEALTH E-NEWS

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WARM UP AND COOL DOWN

Finding time for consistent exercise can be a challenge with busy work schedules and family activities. In an effort to save precious time, proper warm up and cool downs are often neglected. Before beginning any workout routine, consult your physician. Once you and your doctor have determined the best exercise prescription, be sure to practice proper warm up and cool down exercises to get the most out of your workouts and reduce risk of injury. Remember, If you experience any pain or difficulty during exercise, stop and consult your healthcare provider.

BENEFITS OF WARMING UP

Warming up before any workout or sport is critical for preventing injury and preparing the body for the upcoming, more intense activity. A good warm-up dilates your blood vessels, ensuring that your muscles are well supplied with oxygen for optimal performance. It also raises muscle temperature for improved flexibility and efficiency. By slowly raising the heart rate, the warm-up helps minimize stress on the heart.

EXAMPLE WARM UP EXERCISES

Try these before beginning moderate/intense activity for 60 seconds each. No equipment needed.

- **Arm Swings and Lateral Steps** – Step from side to side while tapping the toe of the following foot behind the leading/supporting leg, all while swinging arms out and then in front of the body, crossing over one another.
- **High Knee Pulls** – Pull one knee upwards towards your core, while reaching up and then down with both hands so that your elbows and high knee are near your core at the same time.
- **4 Torso Twists and Knees** – Twist from side to side four times, and then bring one knee up to the opposite elbow. If you follow this same count (1, 2, 3, 4, knee), you should be bringing a different knee up each and every time.
- **Jumping Jacks or Jog in Place** – Simple as it sounds; get that heart rate up!
- **Cross Toe Touches** – Reach down to touch the toes of your foot with the opposite hand.
- **Bodyweight Squats** – To warm up leg muscles, stand with feet shoulder width apart, bending knees, keep the squats shallow and your weight in your heels.

BENEFITS OF COOLING DOWN

A 5 - 10 minute cool down after a workout is important because it allows time for respirations, heart rate and body temperature to return to normal. After vigorous activity the leg muscles help pump blood back to the heart. Without proper cool down, blood may tend to pool in the legs and cause dizziness. There are 2 parts to a cool down, light cardiovascular activity and stretching. Stretching while muscles are warm can improve flexibility and prevent muscle cramping and stiffness.

COOL DOWN TIPS

- Walk for about 5 minutes, or until your heart rate gets below 120 beats per minute.
- Stretch main muscle groups holding each stretch 10 to 30 seconds, longer if needed. The stretch should be strong, but not painful.
- Do not bounce during a stretch.
- Breathe while stretching - exhale as you stretch, inhale while holding the stretch.
- Refuel with a good source of protein within 30 minutes of a workout to assist muscle recovery and rebuilding.

Enhance athletic performance and accelerate the recovery process by considering warm ups and cool downs an essential part of your exercise routine.

CHALLENGE

Take a 10 minute break during your day to perform warm up exercises and cool down stretches as a means of stress reduction and to add some extra physical activity to your day.

SOURCES

American Heart Association
American Council on Exercise