

8 Stretching Mistakes Most People Make

Our thanks to Brad Walker for providing this information from his website: www.stretchcoach.com. Without a doubt, he is a stretching expert.

Below you'll find 8 common mistakes that most people make when stretching, and more importantly, how to avoid them.

1. Stretching an injury

Many people make a few errors when stretching a muscle after an injury:

- a. For the first 72 hours after an injury, you should avoid all types of stretching on the injured area. You could cause more damage to the tissues.
- b. After the 72 hours and for the next 10 to 14 days you may begin some light, gentle static, and passive stretches.
- c. After the 10-14 days have passed, your static and passive stretching may become a little more aggressive, (2-5 weeks)
- d. Once the injury has healed you can begin to use dynamic and active stretches.

2. Stretching too hard

Many people are too aggressive with their stretching program. "More is better" and "No pain. No gain". However, the body employs a defense mechanism called the stretch reflex. Stretch a muscle too hard, and the stretch mechanism kicks in to prevent injury to the muscle, joints, or tendons. The stretch reflex prevents overstretching. Avoid the stretch reflex by avoiding pain and overstretching. The goal is to feel the tension from a stretch and no more.

3. *Not holding a stretch long enough to gain flexibility in the muscle.*

Stretching expert Brad Walker recommends holding a stretch for at least 30-60 seconds and repeating it 2-3 x if you are truly trying to increase flexibility. A 15 second stretch is not long enough.

4. *Doing the same stretch repeatedly.*

By varying the type of stretches you perform on a muscle you will get better results.

5. *Stretching every muscle.*

The rule of thumb is if a muscle does not feel tight or look tight it probably does not require any stretching. In addition, tenderness in a muscle may indicate a microtear or an area that needs stretching maybe through a foam roller, tennis ball, softball, massage gun etc. You want to especially focus on imbalances, i.e. tight muscles on one side of the body and not the other stretch only the tight side.

6. *Stretching muscles that are cold.*

You increase your risk for injuring a muscle during the stretch if it isn't warmed up. One way to warm up the muscles is increase your core temperature. Warm up your body with some low-level exercises. Another way is to use a heating pad to warm up the muscle you want to stretch.

7. *Holding your breath while you stretch.*

Holding your breath can result in increased tension in the muscle making it difficult to stretch. Deep, relaxed breathing promotes blood flow and carries more oxygen and nutrients to the body.

8. *Thinking that stretching is a quick fix.*

It takes time to see results with a stretching program. The key is consistency over a long period of time. There are no shortcuts.