

Important rules for stretching:

- 1) Never stretch cold muscles. The best time to stretch is after your walk. If you have problem areas they can be stretched prior to your walk, but only do this after you have warmed up.
- 2) Do not bounce. Go into a stretch slowly and hold gently. Stretch to the point of feeling a gentle pull, but never to the point of pain
- 3) Hold each stretch for 30 to 40 seconds. If you have problems with a particular area stretch that area twice. (hold for 30-40 seconds release, then stretch again.)

There are so many stretches it is impossible to cover them all. Be sure to stretch all the major muscle groups, and put extra focus on any areas you have trouble with. Find a few recommended stretches below:

Calf Stretch -- Stand on your toes on a step or curb. Hold on to something for balance. Remove your left foot and slowly allow the right heel to move down. Hold this position. Be sure to keep you body upright and straight. Release and repeat on the other side.

Another calf stretch -- Take a big step forward with your left foot, keeping you right heel on the ground. Hold the position and repeat on the other side. Be sure to keep your body upright and your abs tight, do not arch your back.

Shin Stretch -- Standing up, hold on to a stationary object. Stand with your weight on one leg and straighten it. Place your other foot on the ground, with toes pointed and your toenails toward the floor. With the tops of your toes touching the ground, roll your foot and leg forward, from the ankle. Release and repeat on the other side.

Hamstring and Lower Back -- Slowly bend forward from your waist with your knees slightly bent. Reach for the floor and hold. Only bend as far as comfortable.

Outer thigh and buttocks and spine -- While lying on your back bring your right knee up. Place your left hand on your thigh and gently pull it over to your left side. Do not pull at the knee. Your shoulders, left leg and back should remain flat. Pull gently. Then repeat on the left side.

Lower back -- While lying on your back, bring both knees up towards the chest with the hands. Round the lower back and relax into the stretch. Don't do this stretch on a hard surface...it will bruise the spine!

Quadriceps Stretch -- Standing up, hold on to a stationary object. Bend your right knee, bringing your foot toward your buttocks. Keeping your left knee slightly bent, grasp your right ankle with the opposite hand. Slowly pull your leg up and back, bringing your foot at high as comfortable. Repeat with other leg. (To protect your knee... think of pulling the quads back rather than pulling the foot toward your buttocks.)

Shoulder Stretch -- Standing upright, cross left arm over chest. Place your right hand on your upper arm and pull arm in tight to chest. Be sure to keep shoulders down and do not pull at the elbow. Hold, and then repeat stretch with other arm.

Neck Relaxer -- Turn and look over your right shoulder and hold. Repeat on the left side. Don't hyper-extend the neck, or tilt it backwards.

Next, gently drop the head so that the ear goes towards the right shoulder and hold. Return to upright position. Repeat forward and on the left side. Keep the spine in an upright position and don't hyper-extend the neck, jerk, or tilt the head backwards.