



Health & Fitness

By: Christine McInnes

Disclaimer: This newsletter is based on the information I have discovered through my passion of health and fitness. I am not a health professional. Seek the advice of your physician before starting a new diet and/or exercise program.

You Have Got to Stretch!!

We all know how important eating healthy and exercise is but a lot of people neglect stretching which is just as important, if not more. When done properly, stretching reduces tearing of the soft muscle tissues, muscle fibers and tendons. It improves posture by realigning the spine as well as delivers vital nutrients to the joints and muscles. This, in return, keeps you from getting injured during training and during your day to day activities. Stretching doesn't only you help you physically but mentally as well.

It is extremely important to warm-up before stretching for at least 5 – 20 minutes. The warmer your muscles and tendons are, the better you will be able to stretch and not tear your muscles. Warming up will help increase your core temperature, circulate the blood flow to your muscle (which supplies oxygen to your muscles), get your breathing into a rhythm and it will help you to avoid premature muscle fatigue. Also as you warm up you may notice some muscles that are a little stiff and may need a little extra attention while stretching. In more severe instances, you may receive early warning signs that you are not ready for a high intensity workout during your warm-up.

As muscles become tight they put too much stress on your tendons, causing them to overwork and become injured. It is good to stretch all the large muscle groups (i.e. back, hamstrings, quad). Make sure you pay special attention to your hips and shoulders. When these areas are flexible it helps tremendously as we get older. A lot of elderly individuals fall and break their hips because their body isn't able to adjust to the impact or their range of motion is so limited that they are not able to catch themselves. As we age, we naturally lose flexibility because we have less elasticity in our muscles. This is why it is important to start a stretching regiment today! It'll help preserve and increase the flexibility you have now.

Tip

When warming up your heart rate should be between 55% – 65% of your Maximum Heart Rate (MHR).

Use the following formula to estimate your MHR:

$$\text{MHR} = 220 - \text{age}$$

According to this formula a 40-years old's MHR would be 180 beats per minute (bpm).

To find your targeted warm-up heart rate, use the following formulas:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{MHR} \times .55 &= 55\% \text{ MHR} \\ \text{MHR} \times .65 &= 65\% \text{ MHR} \end{aligned}$$

This makes a 40-year old's targeted warm-up heart rate between 99 and 117 bpm.

Keep in mind this number is an estimate, your true MHR may change by a few beats per minute depending on your sex, weight and physical condition.

The definition of stretching according to Wikipedia:

In its most basic form, stretching is a natural and instinctive activity; it is performed by humans and many animals. It can be accompanied by yawning.

Stretching often occurs instinctively after waking from sleep, after long periods of inactivity, or after exiting confined spaces and areas.

Stretching is a form of physical exercise in which a specific skeletal muscle (or muscle group) is deliberately elongated, often by abduction from the torso, in order to improve the muscle's felt elasticity and reaffirm comfortable muscle tone. The result is a feeling of increased muscle control, flexibility and range of motion.

Stretching is also used therapeutically to alleviate cramps.

There are many types of stretching, some that you do by yourself and others that require a partner. In this newsletter I will touch on static stretching, active stretching and dynamic stretching. These are all stretches that can be done on your own. During your stretch, focus on; breathing, posture/form and intensity level. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Make sure you are not locking your joints by keeping knees and elbows slightly bent. You want to feel pressure applied to your muscles, not any other part of your body, such as your joints. Stretching is a slow gradual increase of pressure/tension. If you feel pain, you are overstretching ... stretching should NEVER hurt!

The most common and best stretch for the general population is static stretching. This is when you gently go into a stretch and hold it for 20-30 seconds. There are no jerking movements or bouncing that results in a low injury. If you are overweight, pregnant or have joint problems such as arthritis, this is the perfect stretch for you to stick with. If you are just getting into a stretching and/or exercise routine, it is recommended that you do this type of stretching for at least a month. This will allow you to feel what a stretch should feel like and get used to the amount of pressure that is applied.

When you are able to challenge yourself and know the difference between good and bad pain, you should add active stretching to your routine. This allows our bodies to improve nerve and muscular interactions. It is a technique used in Yoga and Pilates. The poses are not only stretching your joints and muscles but you are also using stabilizing muscles to hold the position making those muscles stronger as you stretch.

Dynamic stretching is used as part of a warm-up. It is a controlled movement where the positions are not held any longer than 2 seconds. The stretch does not include any jerking or bouncing movements but rather a slow controlled gliding type of movement. It is often used during aerobics classes and by athletes who are training for a specific event. It is the most advanced of the three exercises mentioned in this newsletter.

As I mentioned before the younger you are the more flexible you are. If you have young children, start teaching them how to stretch as part of your family time. Keep in mind that not everyone has the same stretching abilities. Athletic level and gender will also determine how flexible you are. Women are typically more flexible than men.

Go to: sparkpeople.com and type “stretching” in their search field for more information about stretching. They have helpful hints, articles and free online instructional videos that will help keep you and your family injury free and healthy.



[First Annual BWS 5K October 2008](#)
From the left going clockwise; Elaine,
Mark Kruger, Mary Montigny and myself

Breast Cancer Survivor

I have chosen Elaine Cromwell for the Month of October also known as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. She is a mother of 3, grandmother of 7, wife of 53 years, a 5k race participant, cyclist, former competitive tennis player and breast cancer survivor of 34 years. Although she would never call herself an athlete, there is no doubt in my mind that she is and her story is one that will motivate and inspire many.

I remember as a child my grandparents played tennis but it wasn't until this interview that I had realized she had played competitively and her biggest athletic accomplishments were winning tennis tournaments. When asked about her greatest physical/athletic accomplishment she said, “I was an avid player when I was in my 20's to 40's. I would play nearly every day in good weather.”

She didn't start running in 5K road races until the 1st Annual Beckwith-Wiedemann Syndrome (BWS) 5K Road Race put on by Mark and Jay Kruger (participants in the reality show “Biggest Loser” Season 5) to raise money for the Beckwith-Wiedemann Children's Foundation. The race took place in October of 2008 and my mother (her daughter) Cheryl, my sister Mary, my husband Keith, her husband Chuck and I were all there taking part in the race. This was the first of many 5Ks (3.1 mile road race) that we participated in as a family. As a huge fan of the show, she was able to meet a lot of the participants. Not to mention, get 2nd place for her age division and discover how fun road races are. She said “Gramps and I ran when we were in our 30's but never in competition. We did it just to get a little exercise but it only lasted a little while.” My mother, sister and I could see the excitement in her eyes after placing and wanted to keep her motivated and training safely. So we would keep sending her training schedules and sharing tips. By following different schedules she was able to get PRs (Personal Records) and has taken about 14 minutes off her time in the last 2 years of running. Her most recent race was the 3rd Annual BWS (Biggest Loser) 5k... she placed in her division as well as getting a PR for the course!!

The funny thing is she doesn't love running and always talks about how much she hates it. She trains because she knows that it is good for her and she can see the improvements. She says, “I do not like to exercise or diet. I have been battling weight all my adult life and am still doing it. I find it very difficult to stick to healthy eating. I love all the wrong things. I am happy to say I have been at my goal weight for 2 years with Weight Watchers and plan to continue going to meetings and following the plan. I believe that is the only thing that is keeping my weight down. For exercise, I ride my bike

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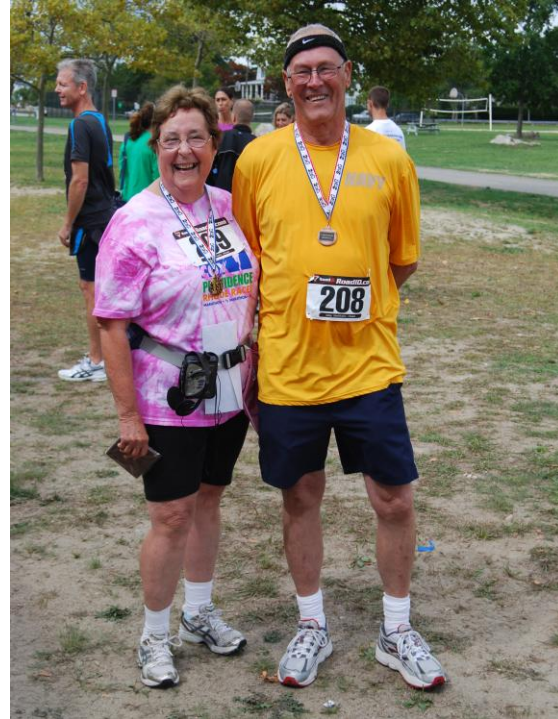
and am usually training for some kind of race... thanks to my girls!”

Currently, her favorite athletic activity is riding her bicycle. She lives on a 7-mile peninsula with only 1 access road and not too heavily populated so that she can ride up and down whenever she wants. “The center of my town is right off a bike path and I am able to do all my errands, grocery shopping, banking, etc. on my bike. I have saddle bags and a big basket.” She said.

“I get rewarded by just being able to participate.” She said when I asked her if she rewards herself.

Elaine was 37 years old when she was diagnosed with Cancer. The doctor found it at a regular yearly check-up. When asked to describe the experience she said, “I was, of course very upset when I found out. I had 3 children who needed me and I thought I had received a death sentence. I didn't know much about it - had never had an operation or had any other health problems, so expected the worse. My doctor sent me to a surgeon the very next day. He was wonderful. Within 2 weeks the operation was over and I was home and back to work and my normal life. I had a radical mastectomy and was on chemotherapy for 2 years (done orally at home). I feel fortunate to have survived and rarely think about it.”

When it comes to Cancer, early detection is extremely important. We all need to make sure we are aware of changes with our body and go to our yearly check-ups. There are many great communities and support groups if your or someone in your family has Cancer. The one Elaine and her daughter Cheryl have based their mantra on is the Livestrong Foundation founded by Lance Armstrong because they “Livestrong” everyday. To find out



Fort Phoenix Annual 5K Road Race
Elaine and her husband Chuck with their medals. They both placed and got PRs!!



Elaine getting her medal and recognition at the Fort Phoenix Annual 5K on Sept 12 2010. Time 39:42 – her goal had been to get under 40 minutes!!

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more information about the foundation go to livestrong.com. This web-site is great for anyone wanting to live a healthy life. It is filled with healthy tips about diet, exercise and general health, has resources for support groups, ways to track your food and exercise as well as a chance to make a donation to the Livestrong Foundation and much, much more.

For more thoughts contact me via e-mail. I would love to hear from you!!

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****Recipe of the Month****

Provided by: No Meat Athlete. Make sure you go to this web-site for more tips and recipes!! www.nomeatathlete.com

Hazelnut Mocha Brownies

- 1 1/2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 2 1/4 cups raw sugar
- 1 1/4 cup cocoa
- 4 tsp instant coffee powder
- 1 1/2 cups chopped hazelnuts
- 1 15 oz can black beans, rinsed and filled with new water
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 cup of water (eyeball it by filling up half the empty can)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Mix together the flour with the salt and baking powder. Then add the sugar, cocoa, coffee powder and nuts. Drain the can of black beans and rinse thoroughly until the water runs clear. Return the black beans back to the can and fill with water. Puree the beans and water. Add the puree to the dry mix along with the vanilla and extra cup of water. Stir to combine.

Pour the batter into a greased 9x13 pan. Bake for 25-30 minutes, rotating the pan around halfway through. When the brownies are finished they should be firm in the center and the edges will be slightly puffy and starting to pull away from the sides. It's important not to over bake in the oven because they will keep baking once you take them out.

Let brownies cool completely before cutting.

Makes 24 2x2 brownies.