

Stretching – Effort/Pressure at 5-8 on Scale of 1-10. Relax and breathe deeply into stretches. Focus on both increasing length and easing tone of tissues. Continual straining will produce negative results. Vary hold times and repetitions for best results. This is an opportunity for you to feel and get to know your body.

Methods – There is a lot of research and many ideas about the best way to stretch in terms of frequency, timing, hold times, etc.. What is important, is what will work best for you right now. As you develop your stretching practice you will see positive and negative changes in the effectiveness of your techniques over time. Here are Four Basic Protocols. Try them all, see what works best now, and mix them up for the best long-term results.

1. 1) **Static Stretching** – Hold for :20 to :45 seconds. This is a good place to start and revisit regularly. This is the best way to lengthen the fascial components.
2. 2) **Pulsing** – Stretch to medium position, then increase stretch to tightness for :01 to :02 seconds. Relax back to original position for :05 to :10 seconds, then repeat for about 5 repetitions. Be careful. Start easy and increase intensity slowly.
3. 3) **Active Isolated** – Stretch to medium position then use antagonist muscles to increase stretch. Hold for one and a half seconds. From 2 to 10 reps is typical, less for smaller and tighter muscle groups. This technique utilizes the Nervous System response called Reciprocal Inhibition.
4. 4) **Contract/Relax** – Stretch to medium level. Contract the muscles being stretch for approximately :03 seconds while you resist with your hands, a strap or any other support to hold position. Exhale while you contract, and inhale deeply and relax between repetitions. Typically 2 to 4 repetitions are most effective. This technique utilizes the Nervous System response called Autogenic Inhibition.

Methods 3 & 4 engage powerful forces in the Nervous System. They are not dangerous, but an ongoing part of our natural kinesthetic and proprioceptive systems. Still you may feel slightly dizzy or experience momentary lapses in balance as your system adjusts. Get up slowly. When stable, walk for a minute or so to allow your system to recalibrate.

Quadriceps & Hip Flexors

1 - Quadriceps – Two options: Standing, or Side Lying. Flex knee and grasp foot with same side hand and raise toward glutes for stretch. Extend hip so thigh angles back behind the hip as far as possible.

2 - Hip Flexors – a) Prop knee and front of the shin on a low padded horizontal surface. b) Bring standing leg forward and out to the side @ about 45°s to the other knee on padded surface. c) Tuck tailbone under. d) Slide hips forward and out to the side into stretch. e) Prop up ankle and foot and repeat a-d. Breathe into stretch and keep easing hips forward while sliding hips out to the side. Ease into and out of stretches as deep hip flexors can be difficult to feel.

Calves - Prostretch, Slant Board, Curb/Step, or Flat Ground.

Gastrocnemius & Soleus – Lean forward with straight trunk. Stretch straight then bent knee. May add medial & lateral rotation of foot of approximately 10 degrees if either side of calf is especially tight.

Legs -- On Back. Off side leg flat on the floor. Back stays neutral, not rounding off into floor. Head back with chin tucked.

1 - Knee Up. Pull Knee straight up using both hands, then slowly arc knee across to 45° degrees. Work tight areas throughout the entire arc. Finally add fingertip pressure just below the knee inside the spine of the tibia.

2 - Piriformis. With opposite side hand pull knee across toward opposite hip. Angle leg over opposite hip perpendicular to torso.

3 - Knee Up Ankle Across. Same side hand on knee with opposite side hand pulling ankle so lower leg crosses body. Stretch pulls knee toward head, while ankle and calf angle cross the trunk of the body. Work tight areas.

4 - Figure 4. Hold position from #3, then bring knee of opposite leg up behind ankle of the first leg. Pull ankle toward head, with knee of opposite leg following.

5 - Figure 4 to Floor. From final position of #4 roll foot of stretched leg toward floor. Keep same side shoulder (of stretched leg) on the floor.

Legs -- On Back with Strap. Off side leg flat on floor. Back stays neutral, not rounding off into floor. Head back with chin tucked. Release tension in strap while moving between stretches.

1 - Bent Knee. With knee @ 75° angle, pull strap on foot to bring leg toward chest and head. Often best to try numerous angles at knee to open hamstrings throughout length.

2 - Straight Leg. With knee completely straight, use strap to pull leg vertical toward head.

3 - Straight Leg Adductors. With straight leg out on the same side of the body. Strap pulls leg laterally stretching Adductors (muscles on the inside of thigh) as well as medial Hamstrings (inner muscles on the back of thigh).

4 - Straight Leg Across. Leg comes across other leg to the opposite side of body to stretch Abductors (muscles and fascia of outer thigh) and lateral Hamstrings. Hips stay flat.

5 - Straight Leg Across with Trunk Rotation. Leg comes further across opposite side of body toward floor. Let hips roll with leg but keep the same side shoulder flat on the floor.

6 - Straight Leg Across Under Opposite Leg. Bend knee of off side leg and lift over stretched leg. Re-adjust strap on foot and pull across under opposite leg.

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