

## STRETCHING – ARE YOU DOING IT RIGHT?

To stretch or not to stretch? That seems to be the question these days among anyone that does any type of training. We've all heard over and over again that stretching is the key to avoiding injury. Well, while part of this belief is true; as far as stretching is concerned, timing is everything.

We can now say, that stretching before you have warmed up is not recommended. In fact it weakens the muscles, sometimes decreasing our muscle strength by as much as 30%. Warming up first is essential! The goal when warming up is to loosen muscles and tendons and literally 'warm up' the body, getting it ready for action. This means increasing body temperature and blood flow to muscles and other structures, usually by light jogging or gentle initiation in the activity we're about to do. Dynamic stretching such as leg swings and trunk twists are also recommended, these exercises must be done gently aiming towards loosening tendons and promote joint lubrication, hence decreasing the chance of injury.

A little piece of advice: Post-exercise stretching has been linked to faster repair of the muscle fibers and a decrease in muscle soreness and stiffness ... in addition, stretching is the best way to let your body know that the hard work's finished.

Happy running and stretching!

