

Stretching

Stretching the Major Muscle Groups

Static Stretches

- **Hamstrings:** Hang down and try to reach your toes; don't push it. Keep legs and back straight. Just go down to a comfortable level for your body and then push a bit more after a few tries. You can also do this sitting down. Stretch your legs together in front of you and try to touch your toes. Then with your legs apart, touch your right toe with your right arm (ultimately aim to bring your head to your knee) and then switch sides.
- **Quads:** While standing on one leg, bend the other leg backwards and grab your foot with one hand. Slowly bring your foot backwards until it touches your butt. Switch legs. It's important to keep your back straight while stretching.
- **Knees:** Rotate your knees in a circle, keeping them together and bending down slightly.
- **Calves:** Lunge forward, keeping your back leg's heel on the ground; lean on your front leg or against a wall or teammate until you feel your calf stretch. You can also cross your legs at the ankles while standing up, then bend down at the hips, bringing your head to your knees, and essentially hugging your legs.
- **Ankles:** To loosen your ankles, lift your leg up and rotate your foot clockwise and then counterclockwise for several seconds. Repeat with your other leg.
- **Groin:** Get in the butterfly position, with your legs bent and your feet together in front of you (your legs should form a sort of diamond shape, heels pulled in to your body and touching). Try to push your knees down to the ground and/or bring your head down to your feet. Go easy though.
- **Abdomen:** Lying face down, lift your body off the ground and on to your elbows—hold for a minute; lean to the right side and then left--builds strength.
- **Stomach:** To warm up the stomach, lie down with your hands near your shoulders and then lift your waist a few inches off the ground using your stomach muscles. To develop the stomach muscles even more, do full-fledged sit-ups and/or use weights. Reverse crunches can also get the job done. Simply lie down on the floor and bend your legs in the air so that your body resembles the letter L.
- **Obliques:** Raise your arms above your head and bring your hands together. Then, in a large arc, move your hands down to your left foot, then over your head and to your right foot. Another exercise is this: maintain a straight posture while keeping your legs spread apart and muscles relaxed. Then, put your hands on your hips and swing clockwise in a smooth circular motion and then repeat but this time counterclockwise. Or, do the twist! Lie down and bring one leg over your knee and then touch with your opposite elbow. Switch legs and elbows to work both sides.
- **Twists:** Lie down and bring your knees to your chest. Then drop the knees to one side and twist to the other side. Arms stretched out for balance. Also try keeping one leg straight and pull one knee into your body and then dropping that knee to the side.

TIP: To fully develop abs and obliques it's important to use heavier weights instead of increasing number of reps. Just like other muscles, such as quads or biceps, abs and obliques can be developed more efficiently with weights.

- **Back:** Keep your legs spread apart and bring your hands together. Then, bend at your waist and stretch your hands out in front of you but do not try touching the ground. Next, bring your arms behind your back (while keeping arms together) and then stretch backwards.

- **Neck:** To loosen your neck, move your chin to your right shoulder and then look down at the floor. Repeat motions to the left. Remember to rotate your head gently, in a circular motion.

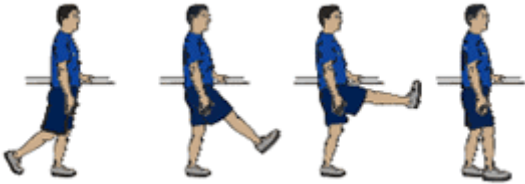
Dynamic Stretches

Dynamic stretching consists of functional based exercises which use sport specific movements to prepare the body for movement. Dynamic stretching involves moving parts of your body and gradually increasing reach, speed of movement, or both.

Leg swings forward and back

Buttocks, front and back thigh

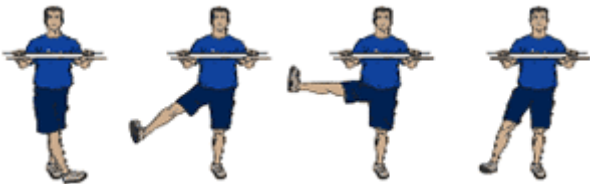
- Hold on to a solid object and balance on one leg.
- Swing the other leg forwards to a comfortable height ensuring that your trunk and lower back stay rigid and do not bend.
- Then swing the leg backwards, again ensuring that there is little movement in your back.
- Try and keep your hips facing forwards and the knee of your swinging leg straight when swinging forward and slightly bent when swinging behind.
- Change legs and repeat.
- Swing to a height that suits your flexibility. Forcing the leg high by swinging too hard may result in injury.



Leg swings side to side

Back and inner thigh

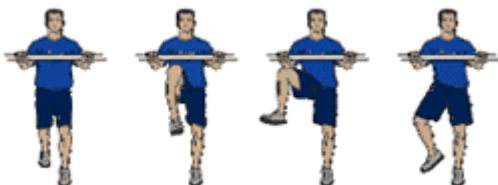
- Hold on to a solid object and balance on one leg.
- Turn your foot on the leg you are balancing on outwards.
- Swing the other leg away from the body turning the foot to point at the sky.
- Then swing the leg back across the body pointing the toes in the direction your leg is moving.
- Check that you are minimizing trunk movement.
- Change legs and repeat.



Hurdle step-overs

Buttocks and inner thigh

- Hold on to a solid object and stand with one leg behind the other.
- Lift the back leg knee high to the front and then rotate the leg outwards returning to the start position.
- Check that you are minimizing trunk movement.
- Change legs and repeat.



Bent over upper body rotation

Trunk muscles, chest, inner and back thigh

- With your feet double shoulder/hip width apart, bend at the hips ensuring that your spine stays long and back doesn't round out, bend your knees a little.
- Extend both arms out to your side at shoulder height.
- Rotate the trunk and arms to reach towards the opposite toe while bending that leg.
- Alternate sides.
- Reach as low as your flexibility comfortably allows (i.e. tension not pain) – it is not necessary to touch your toes if you can't reach that low.



Lower leg calf raises

Calf muscles

- Position your body as if you were on the starting blocks of a sprinting race, feet side by side.
- Support your weight on your hands and feet.
- Start stretching your calves by pushing one heel towards the ground then onto the ball of the foot and then back again.
- Alternate between legs.

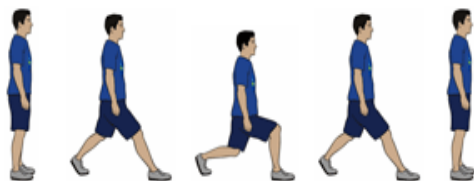


Lunges and lunge walks

Side trunk, back, hip and leg muscles

- Keep your trunk upright at all times.
- Take a large step forward and drop your body down between your legs.
- The front knee should be pointing in the same direction as the toes and shouldn't be too far forward over the toes.
- Check the front and back knees are at right angles at the bottom of the step.
- Alternate between legs.

Progression: The arm on the “back leg” side reaches up and over to the other side on each step. The stretch will mostly be felt down the sides of your trunk. For an extra challenge - try doing the walk forwards and backwards.



Upper body trunk rotation

Trunk muscles, chest

- With your feet shoulder/hip distance apart, stand with your back straight and knees slightly bent.
- Start swinging your arms across your body at waist height – you should feel this mostly in your lower back.
- Move your arms higher to around shoulder height to feel a stretch through the middle back.
- Now raise your arms to above your head to feel the stretch higher in the back.
- If you find a tight area do extra repetitions to loosen it up without forcing the movement.



Arm circles

Muscles around the shoulder

- Stand with your back straight and knees slightly bent.
- Swing both your arms around in circles while keeping your back still.
- If you find tightness in an area, spend more time in the area to loosen it up.
- Change direction and repeat.



Neck movements

Neck muscles

- Turn your head to look over one shoulder then the other, repeat.
- Look up and then down, repeat.
- Looking straight ahead, take one ear to your shoulder then repeat on the other side.
- If you find tightness in an area, spend more time in the area to loosen up.
- You can add light pressure with your hand to increase the stretch in tight areas.



Knee Raises

Groins, Up & Out (Open the Gate)

Groins, In & Down (Close the Gate)

Side Step (**Do Not Click Heels Together**)

Kick-Out Foot to opposite hand

Push-Up position, walking the feet in (do not move the hands)