

Patient Information Center: When Not To Stretch...

Q: Is there ever a time when I should not stretch my muscles?

A: In addition to contributing to overall well-being, proper stretching reduces muscle tension, enhances coordination of movement, develops body awareness, makes strenuous physical activities easier and safer, helps prevent injuries and strains, and promotes circulation. But, in spite of such compelling benefits, stretching can easily be performed the wrong way. Many people run into problems when beginning stretching routines because they try to accomplish too much too soon. It is easy to stretch muscles, ligaments, and tendons beyond their elastic capacity if they have become tight or constricted due to inactivity. In an effort to become flexible faster, people often bounce vigorously into their stretching movements or stretch before they have warmed up. They realize later that they went too far. Likewise, if these tissues have become inflexible due to lack of activity, the bones they attach to and the joints they affect are likely to become partially fixed or locked. In these instances, it is essential to work with your chiropractor to improve joint mobility, alignment, and soft tissue elasticity.

People have a strong tendency to grow tight and restricted in certain areas of the body, largely as a result of not stretching, their habits, and past injuries and strains. Since different areas of the body have different capacities for stretching and flexibility, it may be difficult to determine exactly what type of stretching to do, how far to stretch and how often to stretch. Here again, your chiropractor is an ideal source of information and practical assistance.

Reduced ability to stretch can also be due to anatomical bone formations or scar tissue. Your chiropractor can determine if you have these problems and will help you work through or around your unique circumstances.

Q: Following an injury, how quickly should I begin stretching?

A: Recent research indicates that the sooner you begin appropriate activity following an injury, the more complete and rapid the healing process will be. It is wise to get the help you need immediately. Proper stretching provides too many benefits not to be actively pursued.

Source: (Iowa Chiropractic Society)