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# FUNCTION FIRST FITNESS

*a personal training studio*



## Stretching

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SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO:

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Check out answers to YOUR questions every month!

## Q & A Corner

**Q: What can I do for a quick cardio workout when I'm short on time?**

**A:** Whether you bike (stationary is fine), run, walk, or swim, do interval training. Try going as hard as you can for 30 seconds, then take 1 minute at a very slow pace. After your minute's up, go hard for 30 seconds again. Repeat this 4-10 times, depending on your fitness level. When you're done, take 2-5 minutes to cool-down (very slow pace).

### WHY & WHAT SHOULD I STRETCH?

**I**n recent years, stretching before and/or after activity has been questioned and debated. I could argue for and against both approaches, for this simple reason: stretching should be based on the individual. How does he or she score in a movement assessment? What type of activity is about to be performed? What type of stretching should he or she do? Is the person stretching before or after the activity? What body parts should a sprinter stretch versus a 60-year-old gym user? As you can see, there are many questions we need to answer as to the individual. It's impossible to say EVERYONE should stretch everything all the time.

#### WHY STRETCH?

There is a purpose to stretching. And, stretching should be individualized for some of the following reasons:

- ★ To normalize the functional length of all muscles and allow proper movement patterns
- ★ To increase circulation within the joint to help prevent arthritis and injury
- ★ To correct muscle imbalances
- ★ To decrease muscle soreness
- ★ Dynamic stretching or movement prep to warm-up the muscles

You *can* swing a club or bat faster, throw further, jump higher, run faster etc. with muscles that are operating at their maximum potential of functional flexibility.



### HOW TO KNOW WHAT TO STRETCH:

I don't believe in a generalized stretching program, the one-size-fits all approach. However, it's fairly safe to say that nearly everybody is tight in a few areas, such as: hip flexors (front area of hip and thigh), calves (back lower leg) and the chest/shoulder area. This tightness is a direct result of sitting, poor footwear and poor posture.

I have my new clients perform a Functional Movement Screen (FMS) as soon as they walk in the door. This gives me a good idea of which person should be stretching what. You can see the FMS in its entirety, here, under "7 point assessment": <http://www.functionfirstfitness.com/videos.htm>

The screen will show tightness, weakness, balance, coordination and stability. One doesn't have to be "flexible" to do a perfect squat or a toe touch; he/she just has to move properly and efficiently. If somebody scores high on the movement screen, I may only suggest a few post-workout stretches. If their score is low, I have the person do "corrective stretches" in an attempt to move better and score higher the next time I test them. There's been a lot of evidence based on the Functional Movement Screen in regards to injury and its risk if an athlete scores low. Several professional sports teams are now using the FMS in order to get their athletes "movement" healthy and to prevent injury.

### TYPES OF STRETCHING:

Again, the type of stretching should be in direct correlation with a person's goals:

**Static stretching:** I listed this first because it's the best-known type of stretching, in which you take a muscle to the point of tension and holding for 30 seconds to 2 minutes. Static stretching should be done when the muscles are at their warmest – directly after activity. Some studies have shown that static stretching helps prevent muscle soreness post exercise. The static stretches that I usually recommend address the problem areas: the hip flexors, calves, hips and chest. I do NOT recommend doing static stretching before activity. Studies have found that it can cause a 20% power output **decrease** compared to dynamic stretching.

**Dynamic stretching:** This type of stretching is really movement preparation. The goal with dynamic stretching is to prepare the body for the upcoming workout or activity. It involves movement through the entire range of motion. There is no "hold". Lunges and marching are examples of dynamic stretching. The entire body should be involved to reduce risk of injury. A book I recommend for a good dynamic stretching routine is *Core Performance* by Mark Verstegen.

**Muscle energy techniques or "contract/relax":** This is a partner-assisted stretch used for those who have a need for movement correction. I mainly use this type of stretch on the hip and/or quadricep area. It involves taking the person to a point of tension. He/she then

## Monthly Chuckle



## Monthly Tip

Here's the name of a great nutrition website: [www.precisionnutrition.com](http://www.precisionnutrition.com). You can sign up to receive their emails which are full of great tips on eating to get healthy and/or weight loss. Plus, their 1-year Lean Eating program is beginning in January. I completed the program and highly recommend it to anyone who wants to change their eating habits and attain all the benefits of healthy eating.

## Words to Live By

"Excuses are like calories; too many and you won't be able to fit into your favorite little black dress"

## STRETCHING - CONT.

resists the movement with about 25% effort, holds it isometrically for 7-10 seconds, and then relaxes. He/she can then be stretched to a further barrier. This is repeated 2-3 times. Again, this is done after exercise or in conjunction with specific corrective exercises.

**Foam Rolling:** I consider this a stretch/warm-up for activity. It's also a corrective stretch and a great way to get the circulation increased to the areas being rolled. I call it "the poor man's massage". Foam rollers are inexpensive, and I suggest everybody buy one. For more information on the foam roller click here: [http://www.functionfirstfitness.com/newsletters/2011\\_11%20foam%20rolling.pdf](http://www.functionfirstfitness.com/newsletters/2011_11%20foam%20rolling.pdf)

**Tiger Tail:** This is basically a padded rolling pin to use for small areas such as the calves. Only 1-2 inches in circumference, it can hit specific areas of soreness. I use this for correction or to work on a sore area. It will increase circulation and loosen up "knots" or sore areas of the muscle.

**Vibracussor & Deep Muscle Stimulator (DMS):** These are electronic devices using percussion vibration to increase circulation to an area, heal tissue and relax muscle spasms. Either one can also be used prior to a workout to "wake up" muscles that might not be "turning on" at the right time, if at all.

As you can see, there are many ways to stretch. Flexibility is NOT age dependent. Of course, the longer one has poor movement patterns or poor posture, the more quickly flexibility will decrease. However, there are no physiological changes in the muscles to cause us to grow stiff and tight with age. I suggest finding a qualified personal trainer to do a movement screen (<http://www.functionalmovement.com>) so you know what and how to stretch.

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH



**"Holiday Goodness!"**

Karin Yehling  
FFF Trainer

### Chicken Apple Wraps

#### Ingredients

1/2 cup chopped cooked chicken breast  
3 tablespoons chopped Fuji apple  
2 tablespoons chopped black or red grapes  
2 tablespoons Crunchy Peanut Butter  
1 tablespoon lite mayonnaise (or greek yogurt)  
2 teaspoons honey  
Iceberg lettuce

#### Directions:

Chop chicken meat and fruit. Mix in bowl.

Mix in peanut butter, honey, and mayonnaise.

Spoon into open lettuce leaf, roll up and serve. You can also place in flatbread, or some other kind of wrap.



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#### Coming Next Month!

"Using Exercise To Recover and Rejuvenate" plus more tips, and recipes!