

Smart Exercise

Lesson 3

WARMING UP

Every workout should begin with a warm-up. Muscles that are warmed up and stretched work better and are less likely to be pulled or strained. A warm up should last 5 to 10 minutes. By moving your arms and legs in a slow, rhythmic fashion your body temperature will rise and your heart and blood pressure will increase too.

Some examples of warm up activities include arm circles, arm swings, and marching in place. Select one of these activities and do it to warm up the next time you exercise.

COOLING DOWN

Cooling down is just as important as warming up. When you exercise your heart beats faster to keep muscles supplied with blood and the oxygen and fuel that it carries. If exercise is stopped suddenly a sharp decrease in blood pressure can occur because blood begins to pool in your arms and legs. A gradual cool down allows the body to adjust better. To cool down, decrease the intensity of your exercise for 5 to 10 minutes. Also, do some stretching exercises to build your flexibility and help relieve soreness and loosen tight muscles.

Here are the basic steps to follow for proper stretching:

1. Slowly stretch into position until you feel tightness in the muscle.
2. Hold that position for 10 to 15 seconds until you feel some tension in the muscle, but not until you feel a burning sensation from pain.
3. Release the stretch and wait 3 to 5 seconds. Then, repeat the stretch again for a total of 3 to 5 times, or more if the muscles feel tight.

Stretching exercise can also be used as “light activities” for the days when you don’t plan to walk. And they’re great for relieving stress too.

ACTIVITY

Increase your walking program to a 10 minute walk, 4 times per week. If you are already at this level, try a 15 minute walk, 4 times per week. Remember, don’t push it. Before you walk, warm up using one of the activities listed above. After you are finished walking, try one of the stretching exercises listed below. On the days you don’t plan to walk, do at least two of the stretches listed below.

Full Tilt Stretch

- Stand tall, arms outstretched above head
- Inhale deeply and reach as far as you can
- Hold for a count of three
- Repeat 3 times

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Handling Hamstrings

- Lie on your back, left knee bent and left foot flat on floor
- Extend right leg, toes pointed
- Raise leg and grasp right knee with your hands
- Gently stretch the hamstring and hold for three counts
- Now flex your ankle and hold again
- Switch legs
- Repeat 3 times

Lower Back Release

- Lie on your back
- Gently stretch, arms above your head
- Exhale and release
- Repeat 3 times

Full Body Stretch

- Stand tall, arms outstretched above head
- Reach skyward with both arms and pretend you're picking apples that area just out of reach
- "Pick" first with the right hand, then left
- "Pick" twenty apples in a row
- Lower both arms and shake
- Repeat 3 times

