

## The Importance of Stretching

Flexibility refers to the range of motion or the amount of movement possible at a particular joint. A good stretching program improves range of motion results in many benefits, including: improved posture, balance and coordination. It also balances opposing muscle groups and decreases pain and/or tension in muscles or muscle groups.

### Stretching Fundamentals

- *Never stretch “cold muscles.” Warm up (light cardio) for at least 5 minutes prior to stretching*
- *Stretching is best performed after cardio or strength training*
- *The position of each stretch should be held for 15-20 seconds and repeated several times*
- *You should feel a mild burning sensation (but not pain) in the muscle being lengthened-- If you feel discomfort, the stretch should be modified.*
- *Make sure to breathe evenly throughout these stretches.*
- *Stretches should always be performed smoothly—Never bounce (which increases the likelihood of injury)*

Done properly, incorporating stretching into your daily activities will reduce muscle tension and risk of injury, while increasing the circulation, energy levels and muscular coordination. Not only will you feel better by stretching regularly but, by improving your posture and reducing stress, you may actually find yourself standing taller!