



## Warming Up the Safe Way

In keeping with the theme of safety we thought it would be fitting to discuss the benefits of a proper warm up to keep us safe from injuries. Those of you who take part in a regular regimen of aerobic exercise (i.e. aerobic classes) have the benefit of having a fitness professional on hand who directs you through a proper and safe warm up prior to your workout. But, what about those of us who like to work out on our own or don't have the luxury of a personal trainer?

Traditional (static) stretching - moving into a stretch and holding it for up to a minute - elongates a muscle as much as 1.6 times its original length (Shape magazine, May 1997), but maintaining a stretch this long can be painful for the not so flexible of us and our muscles may not respond favorably to all the pulling. At best it's a two-five minute cardio warm up that works to get the blood flowing and, loosens up your body for the upcoming bout of exercise, whether it be power walking, jogging or running, inline skating, bicycling or even weight training. Muscles will respond better to stretching after a warm up of walking or cycling, or even step touching on the spot. Be sure to stretch out the large muscle groups - hamstrings, calves, quadriceps, buttocks as well as shoulders, biceps, triceps, back, and hips, depending upon the workout of your choice. Hold each stretch for the count of eight seconds and don't bounce - bouncing can result in minute tears in the muscle fibers (an injury)

### Recap

#### Warm up:

- Two-five minutes of cardio warm up consisting of walking, cycling, or step touching.
- Five minutes of stretching of these muscle groups: Hamstrings, shoulders, back, quadriceps, biceps, triceps, buttocks, calves, hips, and shins.

This is a good and safe pre-workout regimen (just look both ways when you cross the street!).

After your workout is done - it's a good idea to stretch out those muscles that you've worked (five minutes) during the cool down component of your workout.

#### Note:

No pain... not gain! If it hurts, stop whatever you are doing and stretch it out!  
If muscle soreness continues hours later, stretch those muscles again.

**Remember:** Always check with your doctor before starting an exercise program and when she/he says yes, think safety first! You would never drive your car in the dead of winter without it having had a chance to warm up now, would you?

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