

STRETCHING for better joint health



For years, people assumed stretching was something only athletes needed to do before exercising or competing. But the reality is that doing simple stretches just two or three times a week can dramatically help anyone increase flexibility, improve balance, and relieve the pain caused by muscle and joint stiffness.

Stretching is a simple and safe way to help prevent life-changing falls that can threaten your independence. Your range of motion — how far you can move a joint in various directions — is determined by many things, starting with the inner workings of the joints involved. Also important is the amount of tension in the muscles surrounding the joint, which can be affected by scarring or your habitual posture (passive factors), or by involuntary muscle spasms or purposeful muscle contractions (active factors).

Stretching exercises can help extend your range of motion. To understand how, it helps to know what joints, tendons, and ligaments do:

- Joints are the junctions that link bones together. The architecture of each joint — that is, whether its structure is a hinge, pivot, or ball-in-socket — determines how the bones can move.
- Tendons are flexible cords of strong tissue that connect muscles to bones.
- Ligaments are tough, fibrous bands of tissue that bind bone to bone, or bone to cartilage, at a joint. An example is the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), one of five ligaments that together control the movements of the knee. Among other things, the ACL keeps the knee joint from rotating too far.

When you stretch, you're working muscles and tendons rather than ligaments. Ligaments are not supposed to be elastic. An overly stretchy ligament wouldn't provide the stability and support needed for a safe range of movement.



*This healthy living information is provided by
your Doctor of Chiropractic and the
Idaho Association of Chiropractic Physicians (IACP) .*