

# Benefits of stretching

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Almost any athlete will tell you that they have had to stretch while playing for their coach; most prominently static stretching. Do these stretches help athletes perform at a higher level? Do they keep athletes from injury?

Several researchers are out to prove that these stretches maybe don't have the impact that coaches and trainers have been thinking that they do.

Although upon hearing that the pre workout, pre exercise routine of millions of athletes might be for nothing is pretty hard to believe considering the impact that it has obviously made in the sport world.

There have been thousands of studies on the benefits of stretching. Many people feel that stretching is a necessity. With more and more studies though it's been hard to find evidence proving these ideas. " When a muscle is lengthening, the muscle fibers and connective tissues are elongated because of the application of external forces. " (Pornratshanee, Hume, Kolt). When these fibers are extended it allows the muscle to experience a fuller range of motion. There are two main factors in most injuries, Lack of ROM (range of motion) and muscle stiffness.

Most would think that this evidence proves that stretching indeed would help prevent injuries. Not necessarily, in the research done in the article, " STRETCHING REVIEW: A Scientific Review of the Benefits, Or Lack Thereof, Of Stretching" the author feels that, " just because a stiff muscle is related to a sports injury, and stretching can lessen a muscle's stiffness, this does not mean that stretching prevents injury (STRETCHING REVIEW). " Different types of stretching include: ballistic stretching, dynamic stretching, and static stretching.

Static stretching is the most commonly used type of stretching. After seeing that static stretching didn't improve injury resistance, researchers then wonder if there are benefits in static stretching at all. Does static stretching help with performance levels? The research done by David G. Behn in his article, " Short Durations Of Static Stretching When Combined With Dynamic Stretching Do Not Impair Repeated Sprints And Agility. " Set out to find the answer to this question.

Participants in the study were tested by level of flexibility followed by stretching and then put in Repeated-sprint Ability (RSA) and Change of Direction (COD) Tests. The results of this study showed that time length of stretching had no significant effect on the performance levels of the study group. Also the study found that there is no satisfactory evidence to prove that stretching would increase performance (Behm). While some researchers say that there isn't any proof of stretching, others such as Peter McNair say that these researchers are missing something.

Where the research gets complicated starts at the realization; maybe it's not that stretching doesn't have benefits but actually there are certain activities that flexibility can be used as a benefit and others that less flexibility should be sought after. Some Researchers say that a certain level of being less flexible might actually help certain types of athletes. Whereas other activities a fuller range of motion is beneficial (McNair). In conclusion it is noticed that researchers aren't completely sure of the benefits. Several factors are involved in the research of these benefits.

The many factors make it hard to fully understand the advantage or disadvantage of stretching. People should consider the sport they are playing

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also, and even the position. It's hard to think that stretching doesn't have the impact that we once thought, but it's a concept that might start grasping the world of sports as we know it. Works Cited Weerapong, Pornratshanee, Patria A. Hume, and Gregory S. Kolt. " Stretching: Mechanisms And Benefits For Sport Performance And Injury Prevention. " *Physical Therapy Reviews* 9. 4 (2004): 189-206. AcademicSearch Complete. Web. 18 Nov. 2012. STRETCHING REVIEW: A Scientific Review Of The Benefits, Or Lack Thereof, Of Stretching. " *Journal Of Pure Power* 4. 1 (2009): 68-70. Academic Search Complete. Web. 18 Nov. 2012. David G. Behm, et al. " Short Durations Of Static Stretching When Combined With Dynamic Stretching Do Not Impair Repeated Sprints And Agility. " *Journal Of SportsScience& Medicine* 10. 2 (2011): 408-416. Academic Search Complete. Web. 18 Nov. 2012. Peter McNair, et al. " Stretching And Injury Prevention: An Obscure Relationship. " *Sports Medicine* 34. 7 (2004): 443-449. Academic Search Complete. Web. 18 Nov. 2012