

## Stretching Tips

### Flexibility vs. Stretching

- Flexibility is the ability to move a joint through its full range of motion without discomfort or pain.
- Stretching can help improve your flexibility by improving elasticity of the muscles.

### Importance of Flexibility

- Flexibility helps:
  - Keep the body limber and agile
  - Release stress and tension in muscles
  - Reduce joint stiffness
  - Increase stride length
  - Improve walking/running efficiency
  - Decrease risk of injury
  - Increase range of motion
  - Contribute to correcting muscular imbalances
- Some of the factors affecting flexibility include body temperature, time of day, genetic makeup, age, muscle mass, activity level and injury.

### Types of Stretches

- Dynamic stretching is movement-based and uses the muscles themselves to initiate stretches. It is recommended to do dynamic stretching of smooth, fluid motions without any bouncing or jerking for 5 to 10 minutes as part of the warm-up before exercise.
- Static stretching is holding a position without movement. Static stretching can help your muscles recover faster after a workout, leading to less pain and stiffness. Static stretching is typically done 5 to 10 minutes after completing exercise.

### Guidelines for Stretching

- It is recommended that you stretch all major muscle groups, and focus on the muscles used during your workout.
  - For dynamic stretching, perform each movement four to five times.
  - For static stretching, do two to four sets and hold each position for 15 to 30 seconds.
- Stretching regimens should be done at least two to three times a week.
- Never stretch to the point of pain; stop when you feel mild discomfort.
- Do not hold your breath while stretching.

### How to Warm-up Before Exercise

- Stretching before exercise increases heart rate, blood flow and body temperature. It also prepares muscles and joints while decreasing the risk of injury.
- This can be completed by doing a two- to three-minute jog, walk or cycle. It can also be done by doing movements that mimic your workout. This can be paired with five minutes of dynamic stretching.
- When performing pre-exercise warm-ups, gradually increase speed and intensity to reduce the risk of injury.



### **How to Cool Down After Exercise**

- Performing cool-down activities after exercise decreases heart rate, blood flow and blood pooling in muscles. It also helps the muscles relax and minimizes stiffness and muscle soreness, as well as lactic acid accumulation. If performed consistently, cool-down activities can also help to increase your range of motion.
- This can be completed by doing a two- to three-minute jog, walk or cycle, followed by five to 10 minutes of static stretching. Make sure to gradually decrease speed and intensity to avoid injury.

### **Additional Support**

- If you are a Quad employee, spouse or dependent on the health plan and would like additional support in your physical activity goals, free health coaching is available! Call 1-888-417-1001 today to set-up an appointment!

**Questions? Contact [Quadwellness@quadmedical.com](mailto:Quadwellness@quadmedical.com)**