

# Stretching for Endurance

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Kim Johnston is CP's Head Strength Conditioning Coach. Working out of the sportsmed gym she offers personal training and small group sessions to take your performance to the next level (includes free gym access when working with Kim). Follow [this link](#) for more info.

## Flexibility and Stretching – Why?

Achieving and maintaining flexibility are important factors in reaching your optimal physical potential!

### Why?

- Enhances movement performance
- Reduces muscle tension & soreness
- Reduces the risk of injury long-term and short term
- Encourage changing firing patterns and the movement planes you work in
- Enhances mental and physical relaxation, allowing your body to recover and establish quality future training sessions

### Warming up

Flexibility training can (and should!) be included in your warm up and cool down, or it can be done at separate times during the week. A good warm up can reduce the amount of muscle and joint soreness that you may experience during the early stages of your training and racing. An acceptable warm up would begin with 5-10 minutes of dynamic stretching e.g. 20 leg swings, walking lunges

### How long?

The general consensus when performing a stretch to have an effect on your flexibility is the "Total stretch time" (as long as it is a minimum of 5-6 seconds/stretch) e.g. 5 x 6 secs; or 2 x 15 secs; or 1 x 30 secs, still all equal 30 secs of stretching and have been shown to produce similar results in enhancing your range of motion.

### Cool down and stretching activities:

Every endurance exercise session should end with a cool-down period, by slowly reducing the intensity of the activity for at least several minutes before the end of your session. Stopping abruptly may cause blood to pool in the legs and dizziness or fainting. Stretching exercises after your cool down will help facilitate increasing your flexibility.

The main areas of tightness in endurance athletes are hip flexors, glutes, quads, lower back, thoracic spine, shoulders and chest. If you also have a sedentary job and sit all day hovering over a computer, this will also contribute to the tightness in these areas. Therefore it's important to have micro-breaks, from your desk by getting up, walking around and stretching out whenever you can.

Below are a series of static stretches for you to try **after** your training/cool down sessions.

### Quadricep Stretch

Quick tips:

- Pull your foot in towards your butt
- Tuck your pelvis under (i.e. no excessive arch in your back)
- knees are parallel with each other
- knee points directly towards the ground



### Hip flexor stretch

Quick tips:

- Front leg – knee is at 90degrees
  - Knee and ankle are in line
- Tuck pelvis under (i.e. no excessive arch in lower back)
- Raise arms and side flex across lifted knee



### Glute max stretch

Quick tips:

- Bend knee and bring out in front of you and aim to square up your foot and knee
- Your back leg stays grounded with knee pointing downwards
- Lower your body and place elbows on the floor, or if this isn't possible; stay upright with your hands on the ground



### Hamstrings/Erector Spinae

#### Quick tips:

- Widen your legs as humanly possible for you
- Take your opposite arm and reach over your head towards your flexed foot



### Hamstring stretch

#### Quick tips:

- Take wide leg stance
- Bend from the hips and place your hands towards the ground
- Keep a slight bend in your knees



### Foam roller correction stretch – spine and chest

#### Quick tips:

- Lie on foam roller or large blanket/towels rolled up
- Open up through the chest with arms out wide and placed on the ground



### Shoulder stretch

#### Quick tips:

- Take one arm across the front of your body
- Loop other arm and hold firm against your opposite elbow
  - Can be done standing also



### Calf/Chest stretch

Quick tips:

- Take a step forward, place heel of back leg on the floor and bend front knee, lean forward slightly
- Take arms and join hands behind your body, relax your shoulders and stretch through your chest

