

# Upper & Lower Leg Stretches

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*Note: If you have had any recent surgery, muscle or joint problem, please consult your personal health care professional.*

## How to Stretch:

Stretching should be done slowly without bouncing. Stretch to where you feel a slight, easy stretch. Hold this feeling for 5-15 seconds. As you hold this stretch, the feeling of tension should diminish. If it doesn't, just ease off slightly into a more comfortable stretch. The easy stretch reduces tension and readies the tissues for the developmental stretch.

After holding the easy stretch move a fraction of an inch farther into the stretch until you feel mild tension again. This is the developmental stretch which should be held for 5-15 seconds. This feeling of stretch tension should also slightly diminish or stay the same. If the tension increases or

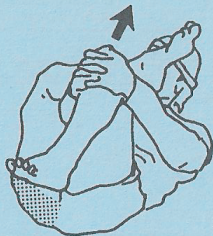
becomes painful, you are over-stretching. Ease off a bit to a comfortable stretch. The developmental stretch reduces tension and will safely increase flexibility.

Hold only stretch tensions that feel good to you. The key to stretching is to be relaxed while you concentrate on the area being stretched. Your breathing should be slow, deep and rhythmical. Don't worry about how far you can stretch. Stretch relaxed and limberness will become just one of the many by-products of regular stretching.

Do a light warm-up of walking for several minutes prior to stretching.

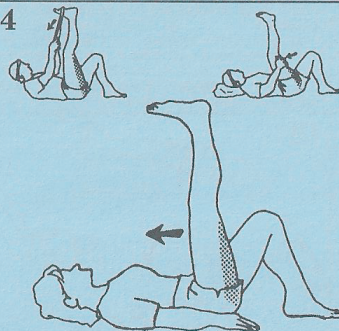
*The dotted areas are those areas of the body where you will most likely feel the stretch.*

3



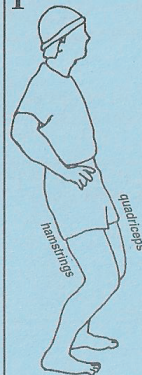
Lie on your back. Bend your right knee and put the outside of your right lower leg just above your left knee. With your hands just below your left knee, gently pull your leg toward your chest until a stretch is felt in your right buttocks area (piriformis). Hold for 15-20 seconds. Lift the back of your head off the ground and look straight ahead as you stretch. Breathe slowly and deeply. Repeat for other side.

4



Lie on your back and lift your leg up toward a 90° angle at the thigh joint. Keep low back flat against the ground. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Repeat for other leg. If necessary, hold onto the back of your leg to create the stretch, as shown above. Or put a towel around the bottom of your foot and pull gently. You can also place a pillow under your head for comfort. Do not over-stretch.

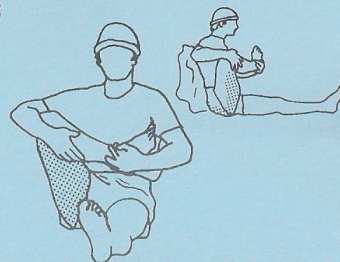
1



Stand in a bent-knee position. This position contracts the quadriceps and relaxes the hamstrings. Hold for 30 seconds.

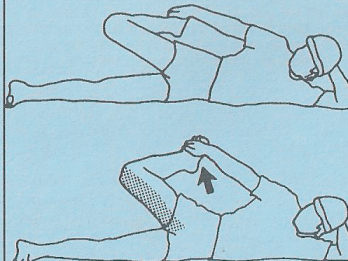
Because these muscles have opposing actions, tightening the quadriceps will relax the hamstrings. As you hold this bent-knee position, feel the difference between the front of the thigh and the back of the thigh. The quadriceps should feel hard and tight while the hamstrings should feel soft and relaxed.

2



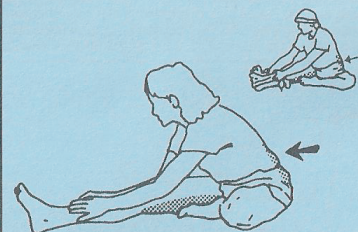
To stretch the upper hamstrings and hip, hold on to the outside of your ankle with one hand, with your other hand and forearm around your bent knee. Gently pull the leg as one unit toward your chest until you feel an easy stretch in the back of the upper leg. You may want to do this stretch while you rest your back against something for support. Hold for 20 seconds. Make sure the leg is pulled as one unit so that stress is not felt in the knee. Do not hold your breath. Relax your shoulders and face. Stretch other leg.

5



Lie on your left side and rest the side of your head in the palm of your left hand. Hold the top of your right foot with your right hand between the toes and ankle joint. Now move the front of your right hip forward by contracting the right butt (gluteus) muscles as you push your right foot into your right hand. This should stretch the front of your thigh. Hold an easy stretch for 10 seconds. Keep your body in a straight line. Repeat for other leg.

6



Sit up and straighten your right leg. The sole of your left foot will be resting next to the inside of your straightened leg. Lean slightly forward from the hips and stretch the hamstrings of your right leg. Find an easy stretch and relax. If you can't touch your toes comfortably use a towel to help you stretch. Hold for 20 seconds. Do not lock your knee. Your right quadriceps should be soft and relaxed during the stretch. Keep your right foot upright with the ankle and toes relaxed. Exhale as you go forward. Breathe easily. Repeat for left leg.