



UNC REX  
HEALTHCARE

## Stretching

UNC Rex Cardiac Rehabilitation

## Why is stretching important?

- Stretching keeps the muscles flexible, strong, and healthy.
- We need flexibility to maintain range of motion in the joints. Without it, muscles shorten and become tight.
- When muscles become tight, it makes us more prone to joint pain, strains, and muscle damage.
- An “elastic” muscle is a strong muscle. By keeping the muscle long, lean and flexible you’ll be less likely to suffer a muscle strain or pull when exercising.
- Healthy muscles also help with balance and help avoid falls

## Starting a stretching regimen

- Aim to stretch 3-4 times a week
- Focus on stretching the areas critical to mobility such as:
  - Calves
  - Hamstrings
  - Hips
  - Thighs
- Stretching shoulders, neck, and back is also beneficial



## How to stretch properly

- Studies have shown that stretching while the muscles are cold (before exercise) can cause injury or muscle damage.
- Instead, do this:
  - A light warmup before exercise
  - Use stretching to cool down and recover the muscles after an exercise
    - Hold a stretch for at least 30 seconds and do not bounce
    - You should feel tension in the muscle but not pain



## Other benefits of stretching

- There are many benefits to stretching regularly. Some of those benefits include:
  - Stress relief
  - Improvement in digestion
  - Reduction in anxiety
  - Improved headaches
  - Positive impacts on overall health
  - Decrease in muscle soreness
  - Improvement in posture
- See attached link for ideas on stretches to start your stretching regimen!
- <https://youtu.be/fIYq4-ipTtQ>
- <https://youtu.be/EuJwrHYswTE>