

Essential Stretches for Runners

Even a slight jog gives your muscles a workout, and many doctors recommend stretching those muscles both before and after exercise. Exercise can shorten a person's muscles, decreasing mobility over time. Stretching keeps the muscles in the body flexible, so that the muscles and joints are at their fullest range of motion.

QUADRICEPS



Stand upright and pull your leg behind you with the corresponding hand.

Tuck your pelvis and pull your shin toward your thigh.

Keep your knee pointing downward as you do this stretch to protect your knee joint.

Hold for at least 30 seconds, then switch sides.

You can also use a chair to balance yourself. This stretch should be felt in the front of your thigh, and from your hip down to your knee.

HAMSTRINGS



Sit on the ground and extend your left leg.

Move your right foot toward your inner thigh, so that it touches the top part of your left leg, if possible.

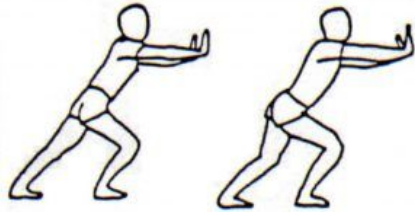
Lean forward, bending but not rounding your back and waist toward the left foot as if reaching for your toes.

Hold for at least 30 seconds.

Repeat with the other leg.

Be careful not to pull back your toe during this stretch. You should feel it in the back of your leg, from your knees to your buttocks.

CALF



Stand with your right foot behind your left.

Bend your left leg forward while keeping your right leg straight.

Be sure not to bend the right knee and to keep your right foot firmly on the ground, pointing straight ahead.

Straighten your back and hold the pose for at least 30 seconds.

Repeat with the other leg.

You should feel this stretch anywhere from the back of your knee down to your ankle.

ITB

Illiotalband Stretch

While standing, cross left leg in front of right. Bend to the left at waist. Repeat sequence with opposite leg.



Stand near a wall or something you can use to balance yourself.

Cross your left ankle behind your right ankle.

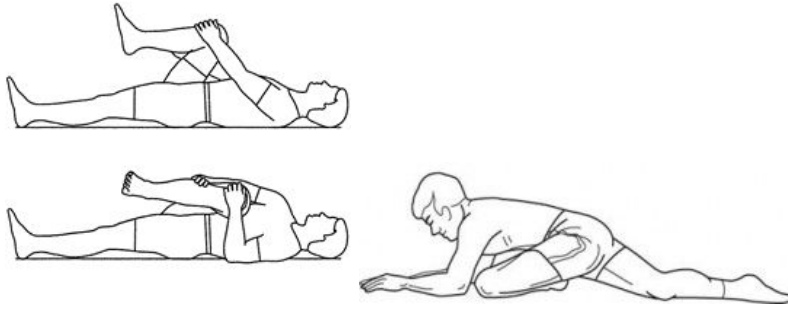
While balancing with your right arm, stretch your left arm over your head.

Lean forward and reach toward your right side.

Hold for at least 30 seconds and repeat with the other leg.

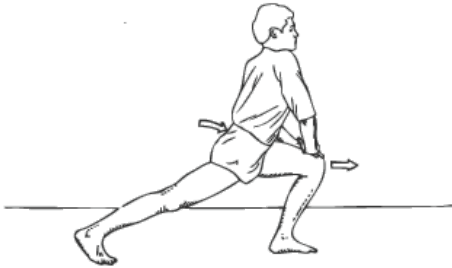
When your left ankle is crossed behind your right ankle, and you're leaning toward the right, you will feel the stretch in your left leg.

PIRIFORMIS



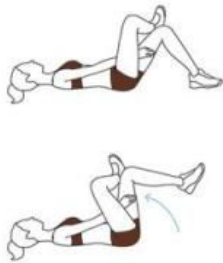
Lie on your back with both of your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
Pull your right knee up to your chest.
Grasp your knee with your left hand and pull it up toward your left shoulder.
Hold for 10-20 seconds and then repeat on the other side.
You should feel this stretch in the buttocks and near your hip.
Pigeon Pose another great stretch (right)

PSOAS



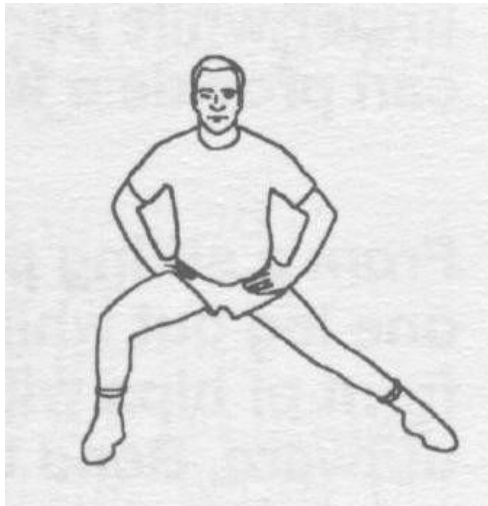
Start by putting your right foot forward so that you are in a lunge.
Keep your chest and shoulders upright and push your pelvis back, and tighten your buttocks.
Lean forward slightly until you feel a stretch, and hold for at least 30 seconds.
Switch sides.
You should feel the stretch on the front of your hip on your back leg.

GLUTEAL MUSCLES



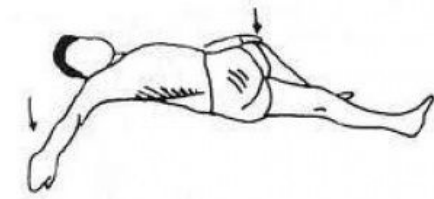
Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
Cross your right ankle over your left knee.
Grab behind your left knee and bring your leg toward your chest.
Hold for at least 30 seconds, then switch sides.
You should feel the stretch in your buttocks.

GROIN



Stand with your feet spread apart in a wide stance.
Without moving your left leg, lean to the right and bend your right knee until you feel a stretch.
Hold for 10-20 seconds, then switch sides.
You should feel a stretch in your inner thigh.

SPINE STRETCH



To stretch your entire spine:

Lie down on your left side.

Keep your left leg straight and bend your right knee so that your leg touches your chest.

Rotate your right leg until your knee is touching the ground in front of your left leg.

Rotate your right arm, head, and upper back to the right until you feel a stretch.

Hold for 10-20 seconds and repeat on the opposite side.

You should feel a stretch in your spine.

LOWER BACK



Lie on your back.

Grab both of your knees and pull them up to your chest until you feel a stretch.

Hold for 20 seconds.

STRETCHING SAFELY

If I have an injury, what will I feel while I'm stretching?

If you have any pain while performing the stretch, you should stop immediately. It is important to understand the difference between feeling a "stretch" and feeling pain. Stretches should feel like something you can hold for 30 seconds comfortably.