

Stretching Exercises for Athletes

The following stretching exercises have been designed by the physical therapists on our Sports Medicine Team to help athletes of all ages—from the full-time school athlete to the weekend warrior—maintain or improve their flexibility and strength.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you have back pain, we encourage you to perform these exercises gently. Do not push your stretch to the point where you are experiencing pain in your back. It may be best to schedule a consultation appointment with a physical therapist to determine which exercises are appropriate for you.



1. Hamstring stretch #1

Place a rolled up towel under your knee; fully extend your leg; bend forward slightly from your hips; keep your back straight; hold for 30 seconds. Perform 1 set of 3 repetitions, twice a day using each leg.



2. Hamstring stretch #2

Place your hands under one bent knee and stretch leg up to the ceiling; hold for 30 seconds. Perform 1 set of 3 repetitions, twice a day using each leg.

NOTE: if you have back pain, be sure to pull on your leg very gently to avoid injury.



3. Hip flexor stretch #1

Lay on your back on a surface where your feet can touch the ground, such as your bed; bring one knee up and put your hands under your knee; pull your knee all the way to your chest; hold in this position for 30 seconds; bring your other leg up to the bent position, and bring the other leg down to the floor to repeat the exercise using the opposite leg. Perform 1 set of 3 repetitions, twice a day using each leg.



4. Hip flexor stretch #2

Lay on your back on a surface where your feet can touch the ground, such as your bed; bend one knee and use your heel to bring the other leg towards your midline; hold for 30 seconds; bring bent leg down and repeat with other leg. Perform 1 set of 3 repetitions, twice a day using each leg.



5. Crossover stretch

Place the forearm on your involved side against the wall; move the involved leg behind the other leg; hold for 30 seconds; make sure to keep your back straight; switch sides and repeat with the other leg. Perform 1 set of 3 repetitions, twice a day using each leg.



6. Quadricep stretch #1

Place one pillow on a flat surface so that it will be under your hips and another by your head; lay on your front; bend one knee to loop a towel, belt, or dog leash around the ankle; hold the bent leg as far back as is comfortable without arching your back; hold for 30 seconds; repeat with the other leg. Perform 1 set of 3 repetitions, twice a day using each leg.



7. Quadricep stretch #2

Standing, place your hand on a wall or on the back of a chair that is placed in front of you; using the other hand, reach back to grab the ankle on the same side; pull your leg up so that your heel is as close to your buttock as possible; hold for 30 seconds; release the leg and repeat on the other leg. Perform 1 set of 3 repetitions, twice a day using each leg.



8. Standing stretch #1

Stand facing a wall; place your hands on the wall; place one leg in back of the other so that the back leg is fully extended and foot is straight ahead with your heel down; bend the knee slightly on the leg that is nearest the wall; push your hips forward; keep your back straight; hold for 30 seconds; repeat with other leg. Perform 1 set of 3 repetitions, twice a day using each leg.



9. Standing stretch #2

Stand facing a wall; place your hands on the wall; place one leg in back of the other and bend both knees slightly; push your hips downward; keep your back straight; hold for 30 seconds; repeat with other leg. Perform 1 set of 3 repetitions, twice a day using each leg.

Questions?

If you have any questions or would like to schedule a personal consultation with a member of our Sports Medicine Team, please call visit our website to find the location nearest you: dhsports.org.