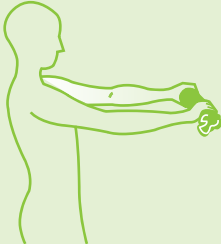







Flexibility is an often overlooked but extremely important component to any program, but particularly one that involves very repetitive movement patterns like running. A flexibly body is more efficient, realizes more strength and endurance gains more quickly, enjoys full range of motion (making daily life easier), is less injury prone, recovers more quickly and just plain feels better.

Just 15 minutes a day, **everyday** and you'll see the benefits of incorporating a stretching program into your life. Perform each of the following exercises daily (twice a day if time allows), holding each position for 30 - 60 seconds (60 if it's a muscle group you feel is tighter than usual).

FLEXIBILITY GUIDELINES

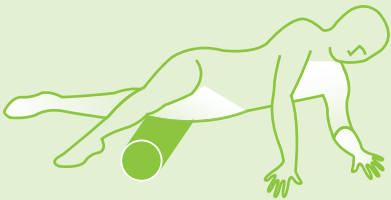

- Always make sure you're thoroughly warmed up before you stretch (after a workout, after a 5-10 warm up, or just out of the shower are great times to complete this program)
- Hold each stretch for a minimum of 30 seconds (your muscle fibers won't hold the length otherwise)
- Stretch to the point of tension, but never pain
- **Breathe** ... no holding your breath, inhale deeply and use the exhale to push yourself a little deeper into each stretch
- Use strict exercise form, the goal is to correct (and prevent) imbalance so it's important to be completing these stretching properly at all times

Exercise	Reps / Sets	Description
<p>Shoulder Passes</p> 	<p>10 Passes, holding 2-3 secs at the "sticking" point</p>	<p>Use a towel or broomstick (broomstick works better), be sure to keep elbows straight and take your time.</p>
<p>Loaded Hamstring Stretch</p> 	<p>30-60secs / 3 sets each leg</p>	<p>Use a strap or belt to apply downward pressure, keeping knee slightly bent and heel pushing up towards ceiling.</p>
<p>Figure 4 Stretch</p> 	<p>30-60secs / 3 sets each leg</p>	<p>Keep your neck relaxed, be sure to maintain an "open" knee position.</p>

Exercise	Reps / Sets	Description
<p>Prone Quad Stretch</p> 	30-60secs / 3 sets each leg	Actively push your bent leg's hip toward the floor while pressing your laces into your palm.
<p>Adductor Stretch</p> 	60secs / 3 sets	Draw your feet in as close to your body as possible and sit tall. Apply gentle pressure to your knees to "load" the stretch.
<p>Calf/Achilles Stretch</p> 	30secs straight leg + 30secs bent leg / 3 sets each	Use a stair or step, allowing one heel to release off the back. Keep knee straight, dropping the heel as far as possible and holding for 30secs. Then, do the same allowing a slight bend to the knee.

Small Investment / Big Reward: The FOAM ROLLER

If you're serious about remaining injury free, you may consider investing in your own foam roller. This little tool can go a long way towards keeping your muscles long and flexible throughout your running career. Here are my **two** favorite foam roller stretches:

Exercise	Reps / Sets	Description
<p>ITB Rolling</p> 	3-5 times, holding 5-10 secs at tight points	As shown, lie on the roller using your arms to support your weight. Slowly roll along the length of your outer thigh holding for 5-10 secs at any point that feels particularly tight.
<p>Glute Rolling</p> 	Hold 5-10 secs	As shown, Sit on the foam roller and place your legs in the figure 4 position using your hands behind you to support your body. Slowly roll over the "meaty" part of your glutes holding for 5-10secs in any areas of particular tension.