



## Simple Guidelines For Effective Stretching

Stretching is easy and there aren't too many rules associated with it. However, there are a few guidelines that you need to consider in order to get the most out of your stretching time. These include:

**Set your own individual goals.** Try not to compare your flexibility to others.

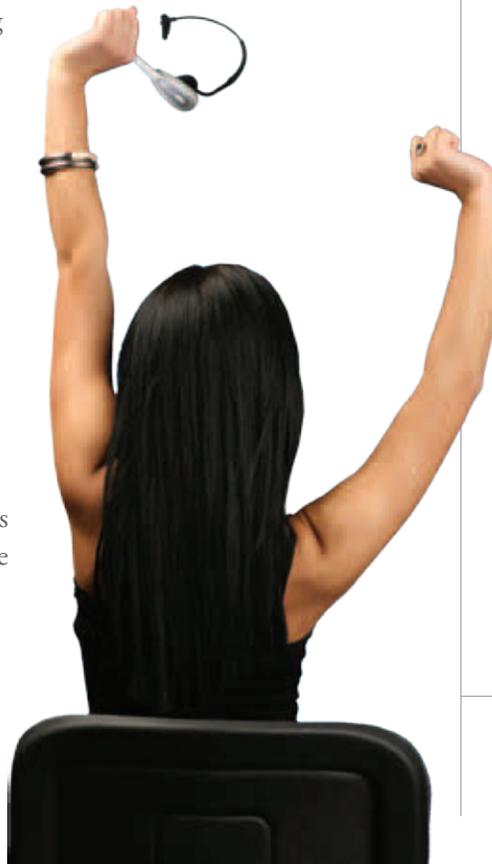
**Concentrate on the muscles you use most and the ones that are least flexible first.** Now, don't neglect other parts of your body, but start with the ones you use the most, as these will give you the most improvement and best results over time.

**Wear clothing that allows you to move and stretch comfortably.**

**Stretching should not hurt.** You can tear muscles if you stretch them too far or too quickly. So make sure each stretch is done while feeling only a slight or gentle discomfort in the muscle. If your muscles start to hurt, reduce the stretch on it until it is only a gentle discomfort. Remember, it is better to go slowly and progress gradually, than to over-extend a stretch and find yourself unable to stretch again for a few days because you have hurt yourself.

**Stretch as often as you like.** There is no limit as to how much you can stretch or the number of times you are able to stretch each day. As long as you do not overstretch a muscle to the point where you damage it, you can stretch it as often as you like.

**Stay physically active.** You are likely to be less flexible when you are less active.



## When Should You Stretch?

There are many different opinions about when it is best to stretch, so here are some general "Rules of Thumb" to remember.

**Limit stretching before activity—**Stretching is a good idea if you are about to be physically active. However, if you like to stretch before activity, first warm up your muscles by walking or doing another light cardiovascular activity for 3 to 5 minutes. This will make sure the muscles are warm and able to be stretched safely.

**Stretching after exercise or activity—**After activity your joints have been moved through a range of motion. Your muscles are warmest at this point and will respond best to stretching. Warm muscles are less stiff and will be able to stretch further.

**Find a certain time to stretch—**If you are not very active, try to stretch when your muscles are warm, like after a shower or later in the day. Most people are most flexible in the afternoon. The important thing is to stretch at a preferred time everyday to keep you motivated and on track.





## Strategies For Improving Your Alertness

Keeping Fatigue Under Control

When fatigue sets in, your life can change in a big way. To help you better manage it, it's essential that you incorporate some tips from a variety of health articles. Here's how you can get started.

### Everyday

- Eat healthy foods (*see Food Pyramid*).
- Exercise no later than three hours before bedtime (*see Activity Pyramid*).
- Communicate sleep schedule with family.

### Caffeine

- Use only when needed to increase alertness.
- Caffeine can take 15-30 minutes to take effect.
- Caffeine can last 3-4 hours.
- Do not use 4 hours before bedtime.

### When At Work

- Talk to co-workers.
- Stay in well-lighted areas or use artificial light.
- Expose yourself to distractions such as music, noise, cool air, etc.
- Use caffeine during vulnerable periods.

### Personal Plan

- Schedule daily activities and sleep time whenever possible.
- Be well-rested before a work period.
- Obtain eight hours of sleep (can include nap time).

### Taking A Nap

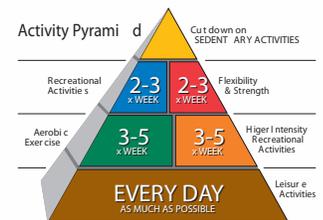
- Napping will increase alertness and performance.
- A short nap should last no longer than 45 minutes.
- A long nap can last up to 2 hours.
- Be sure to set aside up to 15 minutes to "wake up" after a nap period.
- Insomnia sufferers should use caution when considering napping.

### Understand The Basics

- Fatigue is created by time awake and the internal clock.
- Fatigue cannot be eliminated.
- Fatigue can reduce alertness, mood, performance and productivity.
- A healthy lifestyle can help manage fatigue.
- Develop a personal action plan to meet changing sleep requirements everyday.

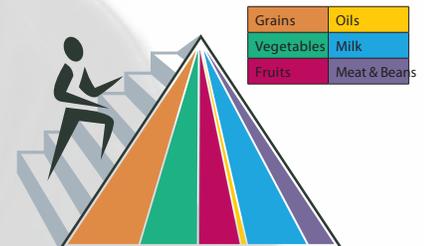
## Nutrition and Exercise Matter

To help you better manage fatigue, it's essential to exercise and eat right. Use the following guides to get the job done.



### Activity Pyramid

Physical fitness is critical for peak performance on and off the job. Increase your activity level using the Activity Pyramid.



### Nutritional Strategies

To learn more about the food guide pyramid and how to incorporate it into your diet, please visit [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov).

## Take Action

As a result of reading the article on better managing fatigue, the one thing I will do differently is:

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## Reminder

Get eight hours of sleep tonight. Go to bed early!

