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**ARTICLES IN
THIS ISSUE**

**The Anatomy of
a Stretch**

Olympic Report

**Everyday
Stretches for
Flexibility**

**The Foam Roller
for IT Band Flexi-
bility**

The Anatomy of a Stretch... And Why Flexibility is Important

By Christa Veinotte, RMT

Flexibility, by definition, is the ability of the joints of the body to move through their full range of motion without restriction. There are many factors that influence flexibility. One significant factor, is the ability of the muscles to stretch to accommodate these changes in position.

Muscles vary in their shapes and sizes, but they all have the same basic function of maintaining posture and producing movement. Muscles are made up of thousands of muscle cells or fibres. Since these fibres are elastic, they can be stretched or compressed. When these fibres are strengthened through repetitive movement the muscle becomes shorter and tighter. If the muscles are not given a chance to stretch, their flexibility decreases. The repetitive movement causing tightness in the muscles may be involvement in sports and recreation or may be related to specific job duties.

After repetitive activity, most people begin to notice a decrease in the range of motion in



that particular area of the body. As this flexibility is lost, there is a cascade of events that can occur. Without the ability for the muscle to stretch properly, the tendons that are attached to these tight muscles can become injured or actually tear away from the bone as in a tendonitis. The muscles that produce the opposite movement are also then overworked as they try to fight the resistance of the tight area.

Regaining your flexibility and range of motion can be reversed by stretching a few minutes every day. Stretching not only reduces stiffness, but it will also help alleviate and prevent pain, improve balance and coordination.

See the reverse side of this newsletter for a few basic stretches you can incorporate into your every day activities.



Olympic Report

By Karen Decker

BScPT, BScK, FCAMT, Dip Sport PT, Dip Manipulative Therapy

Beijing was my second trip to the Olympics as a physiotherapist with Team Canada. The first time was a dream come true; this second, an honor to once again represent my country at the World's pinnacle sports event.

As I set foot onto Chinese soil (at the newly opened world's largest airport) it was evident this would be a very organized multi-sport event. Upon arrival at the Athlete's village, I was greeted by enthusiastic volunteers eager to help out their new international friends.

The venues were magnificent. Both the 'Bird's Nest' (which hosted the Opening and Closing Ceremonies and the Athletics events) and 'The Cube' (which hosted swimming, diving and synchronized swimming) were spectacular. As for the Athlete's village, the calming influences of Chinese culture were everywhere. A water feature wound its

way throughout the four quarters intertwined with stunning gardens. Although it was not as spread out as other villages I have experienced, athletes still used a green form of transportation to get around. Bikes were everywhere.

I was given the opportunity to walk in both the Opening and Closing ceremonies. For those who saw these on television, you know how impressive they were. However, for me, the best part was standing in the tunnel waiting to enter the stadium for the Opening ceremonies and singing O' Canada with Canada's best athletes!

My assigned events included Table Tennis- a religion in China where 8000 people watched daily; Boxing, where unfortunately our 7 time Canadian welter weight champion Adam Trupish lost his first match to the eventual Gold Medal winner; Shooting, where I once again teamed up (as in Athens) with 7

time Olympian Susan Natrass; and finally Modern Pentathlon, an inspiring sport for the well rounded athlete consisting of 5 events that start in the early morning with shooting, fencing, then swimming and equestrian, then to end the day, an exciting 3000m run finish.

Of course other Olympic events besides the sports include adventures such as eating lunch with some famous athletes - Kobe Bryant, Roger Federer, Ronaldinho, and so many more; working out at the Athlete's village fitness centre with Olympic champions.

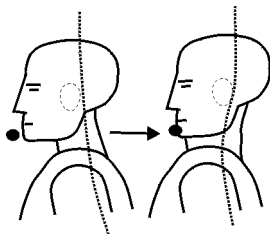
As I departed, reflection of the previous 3 weeks, upon the fabulous colleagues of the Canadian Health Sciences Team, the great performances by so many athletes particularly Canada's, the spectacular job by China, I was reminded once again that the Olympics are truly about excellence and unity.

Everyday Stretches for Flexibility

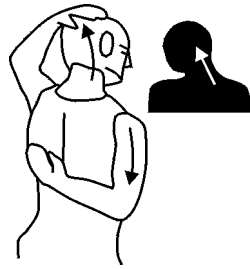
By Ruth Kallevag
BPT, MScPT, Dip Sport PT

Many of us spend our days sitting for long hours in front of computers; doing repeated movements; or in sustained positions. Stretching some of our muscles on a regular basis may help prevent many common painful conditions.

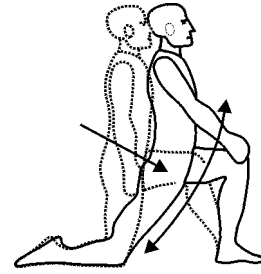
When stretching properly we should bring the body part to the point in range where a sensation of pulling is felt, and sustain that position. Each stretch should be held for 20-30 seconds and repeated 3 times. ****when stretching muscles only a pulling sensation should be felt. NEVER stretch a muscle / joint to the point of pain.**



Sit upright in a chair. Gently bring your chin backwards and tuck your chin. You should feel a slight pulling sensation in the upper part in the back of your neck.

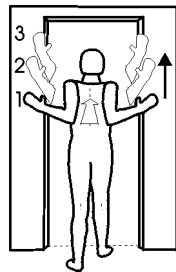


This stretch can be done either in sitting / standing. Bend your neck to one side (as if you were trying to bring your ear to your shoulder) and add a gentle stretch with your hand. You should feel a pulling sensation on the opposite side of your neck.

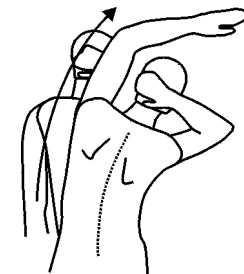


Kneel on the floor with one leg up as shown. Squeeze your buttocks together and bring your pelvis forward, until a stretch is felt in the front of the hip. If you have knee pain, you may want to have a pillow / padding under the knee.

Every stretch should be held for 20-30 seconds and repeated 3 times for both sides



Stand in the door frame or in the corner of a room. Place your hands as shown while keeping your elbows down. Bring your chest forward until a stretch is felt in the front chest muscles. By changing the height of your hands (positions 1,2,3) you will be stretching different components of the muscle.



Support your head with one hand and stretch the other arm over your head. Bend to the opposite side until you feel a stretch in the side of your back.

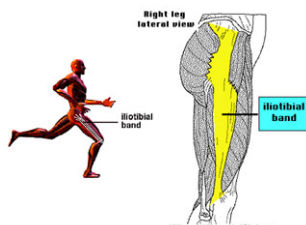
The Foam Roller

By Geoffrey Doak, Bracing Technician with Soles In Motion

Wanting to invest in a new inexpensive, easily stored home gym tool that will help with improving balance, flexibility, strength and muscular awareness? The foam roller may be the answer you've been looking for.

The foam roller is a tubular object made of thick foam that can be used to release trigger points (tight areas) in a muscle to improve comfort and flexibility.

The ilio-tibial band (ITB) roll is one of the many uses for the foam roller. The ITB is a common problem area along the outside of the leg for runners and other athletes.



To release trigger points in the ITB, lie on the roller so that it sits just under the hip joint. Support the weight of your body on your hands & the opposite leg. This leg should be crossed in front of the leg on the foam roller. See the picture below.



Once in position, roll back and forth from the bottom of the hip to the top of the knee (avoid putting direct pressure over the most boney prominences of the hip and knee).

Remember, this rolling helps improve the flexibility of the ITB if it is tight. Tight muscles are often painful to touch, so it will likely be slightly uncomfortable to do this rolling until the muscle length is improved.

Announcements

Congratulations to massage therapist **Melissa Plaster** for completing a course in Craniosacral Therapy

Congratulations to physiotherapist **Karen Decker** on her second successful trip to the Olympics with Team Canada's healthcare team

Congratulations to physiotherapist **Laura Lundquist** for successfully obtaining her Intermediate Certificate in Manual and Manipulative Therapy

