

SEPTEMBER WELLNESS: THE IMPORTANCE OF STRETCHING



When we think of taking care of ourselves through physical activity, two components of exercise quickly come to mind: cardiovascular exercise and strength training. These components are essential in offering a variety of health benefits. However, it is also important to realize that there is another essential component to overall fitness and health: *stretching*.

Stretching is the third component in an overall fitness routine, and it is often overlooked. By incorporating stretching into our routine, we can help maintain range of motion and mobility. Stretching offers an array of health benefits, including improved posture, increased blood flow throughout the body (including to the brain), increased flexibility, prevention of injuries, help with back pain and more.

Certain forms of exercise that involve stretching, such as Pilates, yoga* and tai chi, also offer the addition of mental health benefits such as released tension and reduction in stress.

Stretching also contributes to mental health because it has been shown to increase levels of serotonin. Serotonin is the hormone that helps reduce stress and stabilize moods; thus promoting relaxation and reducing anxiety.

There are two types of stretching: *dynamic stretching* and *static stretching*.

Dynamic stretching is implemented before a physical activity or workout session. It is the type of stretching that goes through full range of motion, and prepares your muscles and ligaments for movement. *Static stretching* is performed after the muscles have already been warmed up. This type of stretching is done by getting into a stretch and holding it, usually between 15 - 30 seconds.

For additional information on stretching, click here:

[**The Mental and Physical Benefits of Stretching**](#)

* To try a 5-minute yoga session of stretching from “Yoga with Adrienne”, click here:

[**Five Minute Full Body Stretch/Total Body Yoga**](#)

(Try what you can, being mindful of any restrictions.)