

Do You Really Need To Stretch?

Stretching has long played an important role in the world of sport and fitness, with many athletes stretching religiously before and after exercise in hopes of preventing injuries.

Lately, this practice has been called into question with many people wondering if stretching really makes a difference to athletic performance. The answer, like most things, is not black and white, as we explore a little in this article.

A brief introduction to stretching

Stretching is a type of movement that increases flexibility by lengthening muscle fibers to the end of their range. Stretching before and after exercise has been thought to reduce the risk of injury, improve athletic performance and reduce muscle soreness after exercise.

The two most common types of stretching are static and dynamic stretching. Static stretching is when you lengthen your muscle and then hold that position for a period of time.

Dynamic stretching uses movement and momentum of the body to stretch muscles to their end range, without holding the stretch at the end.

What does the research say?

Some research has suggested that static stretching before an activity can actually *reduce* power, strength and performance. However, these reductions were shown to be minimal and not noticed at all if the stretches were held for less than 45 seconds. It has also been found that stretching does improve flexibility but only for a short period of time. A few minutes after stretching, your joints move further, and with less

resistance, so you may have improved flexibility immediately after stretching.

Why stretch at all?

One thing that is undeniable is that stretching feels great, with many people feeling more relaxed and reporting a rush of endorphins after a good stretching session. It is also difficult to test the long-term effects of stretching specific muscles showing abnormal tightness. A long-term static stretching routine will improve your overall flexibility, and this is thought to help prevent injuries, although the evidence is inconclusive.

If you're an athlete, the decision to stretch or not can be a personal one. A warm-up prior to intense exercise that includes some form of dynamic stretching is generally recommended for reducing injury risk, but of course is no guarantee. Strength and balance training may have a far greater impact on reducing injuries in the long term.

Your physiotherapist is able to guide you on the best stretching advice for your individual activity and they may be able to identify some areas where improving your flexibility will help to reduce injuries and improve performance.

None of the information in this article is a replacement for proper medical advice. Always see a medical professional for advice on your individual injury.

Five Reasons To See A Physiotherapist After An Injury

There is no doubt that the human body can be very resilient. Short of regenerating new limbs, our bodies are capable of recovering from large amounts of damage, including broken bones. With this in mind, many people are happy to let nature take it's course following an injury, thinking that seeing a physiotherapist will only act to speed up already healing tissues.

The speed of recovery, however, is only one measure of healing and despite our bodies' incredible capacity for repair; injury repair can be less than straightforward. Here are a few things about injury healing you may not have been aware of.

1. Scar Tissue is more likely to form without treatment.

Scar tissue can cause ongoing pain and stiffness in skin, muscles and ligaments. Physiotherapy can prevent excessive scarring from forming through advice regarding movement, massage and other hands-on treatment.

2. Your ability to sense the position of your body, known as proprioception, is often damaged after an injury and can be retrained.

Impaired proprioception is a major factor in re-injury. If you've ever heard someone say "my knee/ankle/shoulder still doesn't feel 100%" then this could be why. The good news is that with a specific exercise program, proprioception can be improved and recovered.

3. Once healing has finished, your body may not be exactly the same as before.

Following an injury, ligaments may be lax, joints may be stiffer and muscles are almost always weaker. While the pain may be gone, there might still be factors that need to be addressed to prevent more complicated issues in the future.

4. You may have picked up some bad habits while waiting for the injury to heal.

While in pain, we often change the way we do things, this can lead to the development of poor movement patterns and muscle imbalances. Even though the pain has gone, these new patterns can remain and create further problems down the road.

5. Injuries don't always heal completely.

On rare occasions, injuries may not be able to heal completely on their own. The most serious example of this is a fracture that cannot heal if the bone is not kept still enough. Other factors that may prevent an injury from healing include poor circulation, diabetes, insufficient care of the injury and poor nutrition.

Your physiotherapist can assess your injury and develop a treatment plan that will both restore you to the best possible function and prevent further injuries. None of the information in this article is a replacement for proper medical advice. Always see a medical professional for advice on your individual injury.

Four Tips For Avoiding

Injuries While Exercising

Being active is one the most important aspects of a healthy lifestyle and there are many different ways to get your heart rate up. No matter what your choice of activity is, there is always some risk of injury. In this article, we have listed some tips from physiotherapists to help you prevent accidents and injuries.

1. Choose the right footwear

The correct footwear can go a long way in protecting your feet and ankles from injury and can even prevent serious accidents such as falls. Every activity places different demands on your body and tailoring your footwear to suit these stressors is a great strategy for preventing injuries. For example, basketball players often wear shoes with support that extends above the ankles to help protect against ankle sprains, while hikers require thick and supportive soles to cushion and protect their feet. Wearing shoes that are too large or have poor grip can lead to slips and falls, particularly when exercising in the outdoors. Your physiotherapist can guide you with the correct choice of footwear for your chosen activity.

2. Pace yourself

When you start to see improvements in your fitness and strength, it can be tempting to push your limits to see just how far you can go. The danger in this is that often your tissues are still adapting to the increased demands of your new exercise regime. Increasing your weights, training time or running distances by too much too soon can lead to major setbacks. Give your body time to adjust and progress in a slow and steady manner.

3. Check your form and posture

Checking your posture in the middle of a workout is probably

the last thing on your mind, however poor form is a leading cause of injury in athletes. Lifting heavy weights when your spine is not in its optimal position causes many low back injuries. Taking a second to check your posture before starting a lift is highly recommended.

4. Seek professional advice

Coaches and trainers are able to help you spot vulnerabilities and share their knowledge, helping you get the most out of your chosen activity. Often it is easier to prevent bad habits from forming than it is to break them once they are already in place. Invest in the advice of an expert, they can help you to avoid injuries as well as reach your peak performance.

Your physiotherapist is able to identify weakness in your training technique, biomechanical vulnerabilities, tight and/or weak muscles and can help guide you through your recovery if an injury does occur. However, prevention of injuries is always preferable to treatment, whenever possible.

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Peninsula Sports Medicine

Group partners with the St.Kilda football club's, Next Generation Academy

Peninsula Sports Medicine Group is pleased to announce its new partnership with the St. Kilda Football club AFL Next Generation Academy.

Peninsula Sports Medicine Group has been "Hands On" in community-based and elite level sport for over 28 years with many of its Physiotherapists acting as State, National and International medical team members

Peninsula Sports Medicine Physiotherapy possesses a vast amount of high-level expertise in Sports Physiotherapy. Joining Amy Decker as Physiotherapist for the St. Kilda Women's AFL team physios, is Simon Johnson who has recently been appointed to the position of chief physiotherapist for the St Kilda Football Club Next Generation Academy.

Simon Johnson will continue to act as team physiotherapist for the Frankston YCW football/netball club in the Mornington Peninsula league and will now add the St Kilda role to his impressive CV. He practices clinically from the Langwarrin and Somerville practices for Peninsula Sports Medicine Group.

Simon is experienced in treating acute spinal and sports injuries especially knee, shoulder and lower back conditions. His passion for football, along with his wealth of knowledge treating football players makes him the perfect fit for partnering with the St Kilda Football Club.

What is the Next Generation Academy?

The AFL Next Generation Academy (NGA's) are a joint initiative between the AFL and AFL clubs aimed at the attraction,

retention, and development of talented junior players (male & female). AFL clubs are incentivized through draft concessions for these players and the role in developing them through the program. Simon as such will be the physio to the potential next crop of AFL draftees and stars of the future

Peninsula Sports Medicine Group looks forward to working with the Saints Next Generation Academy. To find out more about Peninsula Sports Medicine Group and the services we offer, please visit www.psmgroup.com.au