

Warm-Ups, Stretches, and Cool-Downs Safety Tips

WARM-UPS

Warm-ups should raise the heart rate and warm the particular muscle groups that will be used during physical activity. Some examples include the following:

- Doing jumping jacks
- Lightly jogging in place
- Briskly walking around the block or around a large room
- Cycling at a slow, leisurely pace and gradually increasing the speed
- Walking at a brisk pace and as your heart rate and breathing increase, pick up the speed to a jog
- Doing arm circles
- Swimming slow and easy laps

STRETCHING

Stretching should be part of both your warm-up and cool down. Some tips to remember while stretching include:

- Only stretch a muscle to the point of mild discomfort. If it hurts, you are pushing too hard—ease off.
- Do not bounce. Instead, hold the stretch for between 10 and 30 seconds.
- Stretch opposing muscle groups one after the other. For example, stretch your quadriceps (muscles on the front of the thigh) then stretch your hamstrings (muscles on the back of the thigh).
- Remember to keep breathing normally as you stretch.
- See the **Tips: Stretching** handout (Lesson 3).

Source: State of Victoria, Australia. (2008). *Exercise-injury prevention*. Available online at http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Exercise_injury_prevention?open

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COOL-DOWNS

Some of the many health benefits of cooling down after physical activity include:

- Helps to gently return heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure to normal
- Improves flexibility
- Reduces the risk of injury
- Removes waste products from muscle tissue (e.g., lactic acid) and helps to reduce the risk of soreness

It is important to cool down after exercising to further reduce the risk of injury. Some tips to remember while cooling down include:

- Cool down for several minutes
- Taper off your activity. For example, if you have been running, cool down by slowing down to a jog then a brisk walk for a few minutes.
- Finish your cool-down routine with 10 minutes of gentle stretches.

Staying Safe During Physical Activity

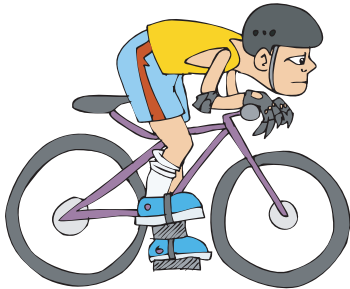
WARM-UPS AND STRETCHES ARE A MUST!

- Start with 5–10 minutes of warm-up exercises, such as **brisk walking, jumping jacks, or easy jogging** to get your muscles going.
- Follow your warm-up with **gentle stretching**.



SLOW AND STEADY PACE

Start slowly to give your body time to adjust.



DON'T TAKE YOUR BREATH AWAY!

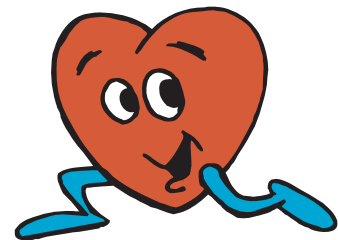
- You should not feel pain, tired, unwell, or gasping for air during physical activity.
- For your heart, exercise so you feel that your heart is working harder but you do not feel short of breath.
- You should be able to have a normal conversation while exercising.

YOUR HEART IS YOUR GUIDE

Check your heart rate monitor to see how hard you are working your body.

HOW FAST SHOULD YOUR HEART BEAT?

Your trainer will tell you how fast your heart should beat.



My target heart rate range is _____ beats/minute.

Source: American College of Sports Medicine. (2006). *ACSM's guidelines for exercise testing and prescriptions* (7th ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Author.

Staying Safe During Physical Activity

DON'T FORGET YOUR COOL-DOWNS!

End your exercise session with low intensity cool-down exercises and stretches.



IT'S TOO HOT!

- Drink water before, during, and after physical activity.
- Take sips of water every 15 minutes while you exercise.
- **Plain water** is the best for activities of less than an hour.
- Wear loose fitting clothes that allow your skin to breathe.



TELL YOUR STAFF OR NURSE IF YOU ARE FEELING:

- Moderate to severe pain
- Pain that interferes with daily activity or sleep
- Swelling of the injured area
- An inability to perform normal activities