Cool-Down Exercises

After vigorous physical activity, it is important to take a few minutes to cool the body down gradually. Stopping abruptly, such as lying down after an intense game of soccer or a long run, only hurts the body more.

A cool-down exercise is similar to a warm-up exercise, but usually is shorter and less intense. For example, a light jog or brisk walk for five minutes, followed by a total body stretch. Not only does a cool-down exercise routine return the body to its normal resting state, it also rids the body of waste material that was produced during exercise, such as carbon dioxide and lactic acid.

Static stretching is basically bending our joints until we feel a slight pull on the muscle(s) and holding that position for 15 to 30 seconds. Static stretches should be included in your cool-down exercises.

Below are some common static stretches you can use. Remember to perform these stretches only after your breathing rate returns to normal.

Benefits of the Cool-Down

Here is a summary of the benefits of doing cool-down exercises after participating in any form of physical activity:

- Prevents blood from pooling in muscles which could cause dizziness or fainting
- Helps body discard adrenaline which increases heart rate during exercise
- Reduces muscle stiffness
- Helps remove some of the painful by-products of exercise, such as lactic acid
Benefits of the Warm-Up

Here is a summary of the benefits of doing warm-up exercises before participating in any form of physical activity:

- Increases body temperature
- Increases blood circulation to working muscles
- Improves muscle elasticity
- Reduces risk of muscle strains and pulls
- Ensures more effective delivery of oxygen to the muscles
- Prepares tendons and ligaments for physical activity
- Lubricates joints
- Improves range of motion in joints

Warm-Up and Cool-Down Exercises

Before doing any type of physical activity, it's important to warm up the body. The **warm-up** gets the body ready for physical activity. Equally important as the warm-up is the **cool-down** exercise after participating in physical activity. The **cool-down** returns the body to its normal resting state.

Both warming up and cooling down may help reduce injuries and lessen the discomfort sometimes felt after physical activity.

**Warm-Up Exercises**

For most recreational athletes and physical education students, the warm-up usually lasts about 10 to 15 minutes. This includes participating in a mild aerobic activity, such as a light jog around the track or gymnasium, followed by dynamic stretching.

**Dynamic stretching** is essentially stretching while moving. Current research tells us that this is effective in preparing the body for physical activity. Examples include "high knee walks," as shown in the picture below, and "lunges."