

# EVERY STEP YOU TAKE

## GET INTO YOUR STRIDE

You've carved out some time in your schedule to exercise and you're eager to get started, making the most out of the short period of time you have. Skipping the warm-up and cool-down is enticing, but dangerous. Time is tight, but so are your muscles! When muscles get tight, they can pull the body out of alignment, limit range of motion, affect performance, and increase risk of injury. Warm-up and cool-down stretches are essential to maintaining a consistent exercise routine, avoiding an injury that can set you back. It's important to stretch from head to toe regardless of the activity you are doing. Stretching can put more into your stride! By understanding how different stretches impact your performance, you'll find that you're much less likely to skip this all-important part of your exercise routine, and you'll feel confident that you're on the right track.



### WARM UP WITH A PURPOSE

A warm-up prepares your body and your mind for exercise. Physically, a warm-up increases blood and oxygen flow to the muscles, improving your level of performance and reducing the chance of joint or muscle injury. Your body temperature increases, warming the blood and making sure everything is more flexible and pliable. Your heart rate is elevated to prepare the circulatory system for strenuous exercise, and synovial fluid lubricates the joints.

Perhaps the most important phase of any workout is the mindset! Review your goals and remind yourself of the purpose of physical activity in your life. Answer the "why" every time, and set an intention for what you wish to accomplish each day. Approaching your warm-up with a purpose is a positive pattern that anyone can integrate to remain determined, motivated, and goal-oriented.

### WARM UP - STRETCH AND STRENGTHEN YOUR STRIDE

**March in place with high knees** for 2 minutes to increase body temperature.



**Dynamic stretches** like jump squats or lunges warm muscles and prevent strain.



**Muscle specific stretches** like a calf and hamstring stretch relax the muscles used when walking.



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### COOL DOWN FOR REST

Just as important as the warm-up, the cool-down takes your body from activity to a state of rest and repair. A 10-minute cool-down period after strenuous activity also offers the opportunity for mental recovery by calming the mind, and can be an ideal time to integrate a relaxation technique. Try a short meditation, some deep breathing exercises, or give yourself time to reflect upon a reoccurring issue or thought you experienced during your workout or walk.

### COOL DOWN - STRETCH AND STRENGTHEN YOUR STRIDE

**Simply slow the intensity of your exercise** or the pace of your walk for 5 minutes to allow heart rate and breathing to come to its resting state.



**Static stretches** for 10 minutes release any muscle tension and initiate recovery. Use a spinal twist for lower back, hips, and glutes.



**Mental recovery** lets you get the most benefit from your exercise and shifts your mindset from activity to rest. Lie flat in Savasana for complete rest.



Fitness and power walking are a great way to activate and exercise all of the major muscle groups in your body. Thank your muscles for the work they do and incorporate a proper warm-up and cool-down every time you walk or workout. Consider a daily 30-minute walk on your lunch hour to increase flexibility and keep joints mobile, aid in digestion, increase metabolism, decrease stress, and clear the mind!



Sources: <https://breakingmuscle.com/fitness/ramp-up-your-warm-up-prepare-with-purpose>  
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