

# FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES

SWIM22

## Stretches to enhance your swimming

Many often question the importance of stretching, but it offers a range of benefits, especially to those that swim!

Stretching not only helps us recover from physical activity by reducing tightness within the muscles, but also allows us to increase our ROM (Range Of Movement) which reduces our chances of injury during physical activity.

Opposite are some stretches to ensure you are left feeling loose and revitalised! The step by step guides are below.

### 1. Lat stretch

One of the main muscles used in swimming are the Latissimus Dorsi, which are on your back, and therefore these need to be stretched to maintain muscle length, flexibility and reduce your chance of injury. This stretch will help you to increase the range of movement in your arms, meaning you are able to gather more water for a larger pull, propelling you forward further. Everyone loves a bit of extra distance!

### 2. Shoulder stretch

This is another large muscle group used in swimming. A shoulder stretch will help to decrease the chance of an injury in the shoulder region, which is one of the most common swimming injuries, while also improving your range of movement.

### 3. Glute stretch

This is one of the most ignored areas to stretch by swimmers, despite it being extremely important. The glutes (buttocks) are used in many of the movements in swimming such as push offs, dives and kicking, so you must maintain good flexibility within these muscles.

### 4. Calf, hamstring and quadricep stretches

These stretches should be grouped together and stretched within the same session to get the maximum benefit for your swimming legs! This is the biggest muscle group in your legs and they commonly work together within swimming movements. Without good flexibility in all three muscle groups, a swimmer wouldn't be able to produce an effective kick in any of the four disciplines, so in simple terms, stretching your legs can better your kick!

### 5. Ankle stretch

Ankle flexibility is the key to a world class kick. Without good ankle flexibility, a swimmer is unable to produce a forceful kick. Ankle mobility also protects the ligaments and tendons around the ankle, as well as improving explosive power when pushing off the wall or block.

- **Try not to bounce as you stretch.**
- **Hold your stretch for 30 seconds.**
- **Don't limit yourself to only stretching after exercising.**



# HOW TO PERFORM A LAT STRETCH

- 1 Put your knees on the floor and sit back onto your ankles.
- 2 Keeping your feet and shins on the floor, lower your chest to your thighs.
- 3 Stretch your arms as far out in front of you as possible and rest your forehead on the floor.
- 4 Hold for about 30 seconds.



Example of a lat stretch



Example of a shoulder stretch

# HOW TO PERFORM A SHOULDER STRETCH

- 1 Stand up tall and bring your right arm across your chest.
- 2 Using your left arm, place it over your right arm and pull your right arm closer to your chest.
- 3 Hold this position for about 30 seconds and then repeat on the other arm.

# HOW TO PERFORM A GLUTE STRETCH

- 1 Get into a press-up plank position.
- 2 Bend one knee and bring it towards your chest. Lower that knee onto the floor with the foot facing away from the body.
- 3 Lower the other leg down to the floor and keep it straight. Hold for 30 seconds.
- 4 Ensure your hips are square and push your chest up to the sky with hands planted on the floor in front of you. If this is too easy, you may want to lower onto your elbows or lower your chest to the floor for an even deeper stretch.
- 5 Repeat on the other side.



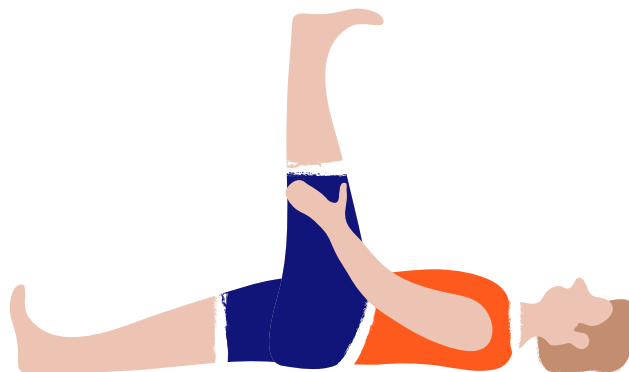
Example of a glute stretch

# HOW TO PERFORM A SEATED CALF STRETCH

- 1 Sit on the floor with your legs stretched out in front of you.
- 2 Lean over and hold the tops of your feet. Don't worry if you can't touch your toes, stretch as far as you can.
- 3 Pull your feet towards you without bending your knees. You should feel a stretch in the back of your calf. The more you pull your foot towards yourself, the stronger the stretch will feel.
- 4 Hold for 30 seconds then repeat.



Example of a seated calf stretch



Example of a hamstring stretch

# HOW TO PERFORM A HAMSTRING STRETCH

- 1 Lay on your back with your legs out straight in front of you. Bring one leg up to the sky.
- 2 Clasp your hands behind the knee of the raised leg and straighten the leg.
- 3 Flex your foot and pull the raised leg towards your head as far as you can. The bottom leg must stay straight on the floor and the raised leg must also be kept straight.
- 4 Hold for 30 seconds and then repeat on the other leg.

# HOW TO PERFORM A QUADRICEPS STRETCH

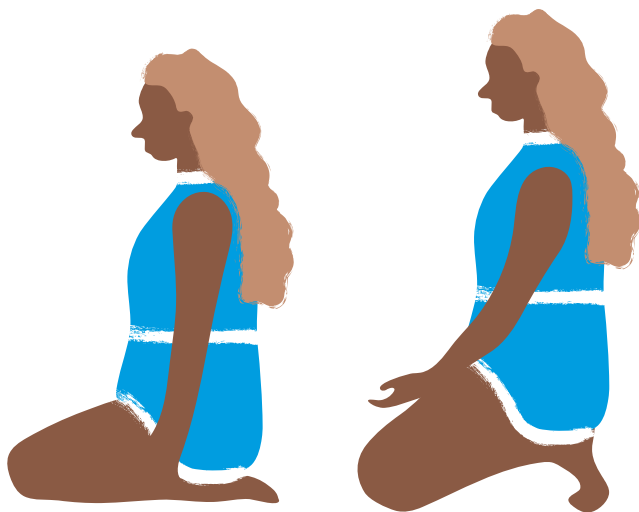
- 1 Stand facing side on to a wall.
- 2 Hold onto the wall and bend one knee, lifting it off the ground.
- 3 Bring your ankle up to your bottom and hold your ankle with your other hand. Keep your knees together and stand up.
- 4 Hold for 30 seconds and repeat on the other side.



Example of a quadriceps stretch

# HOW TO PERFORM AN ANKLE STRETCH

- 1** Kneel on the floor and sit on your ankles, spreading all your weight through them.
- 2** Ensure that the top of your feet are flat on the floor. Hold for 30 seconds.
- 3** Kneel on the floor with your ankles up and only your knees and toes touching the floor.
- 4** Sit onto your ankles and hold for 30 seconds. If this is too difficult, you can put your hands on the floor to take as much weight as appropriate.



Example of an ankle stretch

## GET IN TOUCH

**We're here to help with any questions or concerns you have.**

You can visit our website at [www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)

You can email [swim22@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:swim22@diabetes.org.uk)

Or call our helpline on **0345 123 2399, Monday to Friday between 9am to 6pm.**

We welcome your feedback. If any information in this guide has been particularly helpful or if you would like to suggest any improvements, please send your comments to: [helpline@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:helpline@diabetes.org.uk) or write to us at: Diabetes UK Helpline, Wells Lawrence House, 126 Back Church Lane, London E1 1FH

I understand that when participating in any exercise or exercise program, there is the possibility of physical injury. I agree that if I engage in this exercise I do so at my own risk. I am voluntarily participating in these activities and assume all risk of injury to myself.

Always consult your physician before beginning any exercise program. This general information is not intended to diagnose any medical condition or to replace your healthcare professional. Consult with your healthcare professional to design an appropriate exercise prescription. If you experience any pain or difficulty with these exercises, stop and consult your healthcare provider.

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