



What is dynamic stretching and why do it?

Dynamic stretches are a great way to help you warm up for exercise, improve flexibility and performance.

Dynamic stretches are active movements of muscle that provide a stretch but are not sustained in the end position. The opposite of this is static stretching (see our article on [static stretching](#)), in which the position is held statically at the end of range for any given amount of time. Dynamic stretches are the most appropriate to warm you up pre activity; in contrast, static stretches are more appropriate in the cool down, post exercise.

When using dynamic stretches as part of your warm up, it is important that they are sport or activity specific. Ideally you would combine some dynamic stretching with specific exercises or drills for the activity you will be doing. For example, with football the dynamic stretches, lunges and leg swings would be combined with dribbling a ball, kicking a ball and running forwards and backwards.

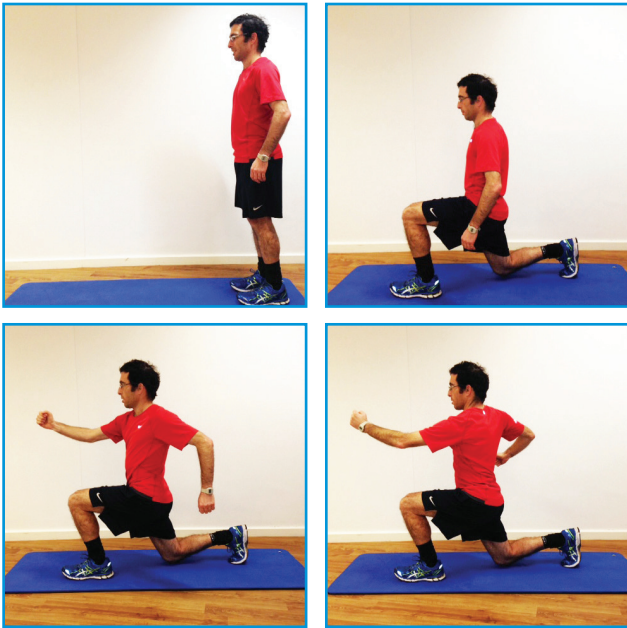
For both the dynamic stretches and specific drills start slowly and gradually increase intensity and difficulty of stretch and drills with repetition. Moderate stretching is sufficient to increase your flexibility; repetitions are the key.

The dynamic stretches below are examples of ones commonly helpful for sports people and those simply looking to improve flexibility, strength and endurance.

Please keep in mind your own body issues prior to trying these at home. For example, it would be inadvisable to choose Rolldowns if you have an acute low back pain. If in doubt, contact a Chartered Physiotherapist for further advice.

Pilates is an excellent means of improving your dynamic flexibility and control. If you would like further information about Pilates with our [Physiotherapists](#) and [Pilates](#) with an instructor, please click on the hyperlinks.

Lunges



- **Aim:** dynamic stretch front of hip (hip flexors) and lower calves (soleus muscles).
- Do 8-12 repetitions left and right: keep neutral lower back (avoid over-arching).
- **Progression:** add upper back rotation (using running arm swing) while you hold lunge position.
- **Watch points:** keep front knee aligned with middle of foot.

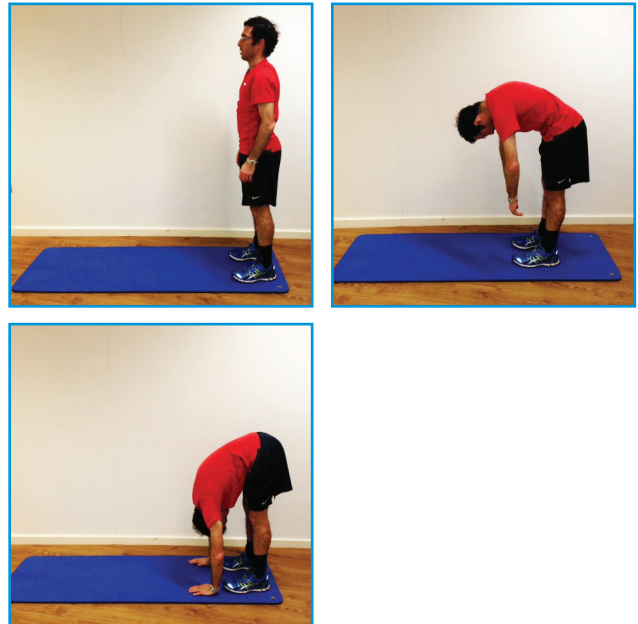
Calf Stretching off Step



- **Aim:** dynamic stretching, strengthening and endurance of calves.
- Lightly support yourself with your fingertips. Rise onto your tiptoes; hold for 1-2 seconds; lower 1 heel off edge of step (other knee bends); hold 2 seconds.
- Repeat 12 x on both the left and right side.

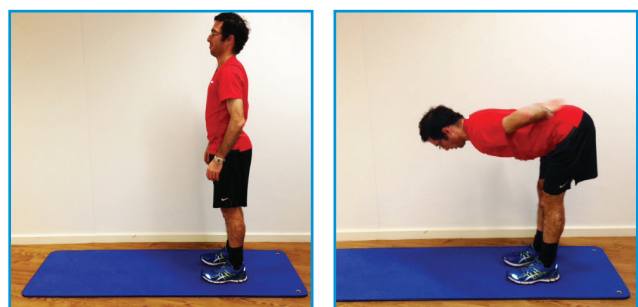
- **NB:** 'stretch' leg can be straight (upper calf stretch) or bent (lower calf stretch), so I suggest doing 6 for each of these.
- **Watch point:** position half of feet on edge of step (heels off the back).

Rolldowns



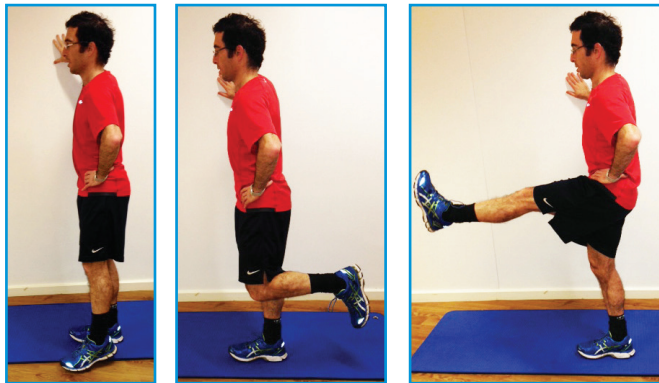
- **Aim:** dynamic muscle stretch (hamstrings, calves, spine), spinal segmental movement and neural tissue mobilisation.
- Roll your head down then upper/mid/lower back in sequence, reaching towards the floor with your fingertips. Allow your knees to bend a little if this is necessary. Hold for 2 seconds, then return in reverse.
- Do x 6-8 times.
- **Watch points:** keep your hips over your feet, ensure the movement flows.

Waiter's Bow



- **Aim:** hamstring and calf stretch and neural tissue mobilisation.
- From standing, fold at your hips and keep your back straight. Hold 2 secs, then return.
- Do x 6-8 times.
- **Watch point:** keep your back straight.

Leg Swings



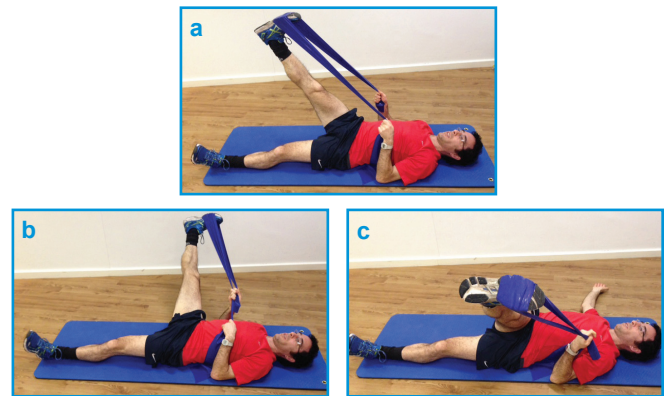
- **Aim:** hamstring lengthening and neural tissue mobilisation.
- In standing (and with light fingertip support if needed), swing your leg forward and back. You may bend your knee on the swing back, or keep it straight.
- Do 12 x left and right.
- **Progression:** lead with your heel (toes and ankle pulled up towards you).
- **Watch point:** keep your back straight (avoid arching or curling of your back).

Book Openings



- **Aim:** upper and mid back rotation, pectoral muscle (front of chest) stretching.
- From start position, float the top arm and roll your chest; hold 2 secs (or longer if you wish); return in reverse to the start position. Follow the pictures to assist you.
- Do 12 x left and right.
- **Watch points:** adequate head support so
 - head aligned with body;
 - pelvis still (hips stacked);
 - upper and mid back should be the focus with the arm and head following (keep the arm aligned with the chest as it rolls).

Theraband Leg Stretches



- **Aim:** Arms, hamstrings and calf stretches, neural tissue mobilisation.
 - Bend knee, then straighten (or partially straighten) knee for a stretch. Do 15 x left and right.
 - Take across body, then out to the side. Do 15 x left and right.
 - You may combine with a static stretch, whereby you hold for 30 secs stretch at the 3 end points of ranges from (a), (b) and (c), moderately of course.
- **Watch points:** keep your pelvis on the mat, even left and right.



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