

# Sports Medicine Experts Have Found ProStretch® Aids in Diagnosis, Treatment and Prevention

*By Deborah Wieder Singer, MS, PT, ATC*

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In the past few years, poor flexibility has come into the limelight as a cause of many common musculoskeletal problems. Improper flexibility contributes to muscular imbalance and places the athlete at a greater risk of injury.

In the clinic, the assessment of flexibility can be used as an effective diagnostic tool. A thorough flexibility evaluation can be very important in discovering the cause of the injury, as well as preventing the injury from recurring. Once poor flexibility has been labeled as a contributing cause of the injury, the appropriate stretching program can be initiated to resolve the problem.

As flexibility becomes recognized as an important aspect of medical diagnosis and treatment, physicians and therapists are recommending ProStretch to a large majority of their musculoskeletal patients. ProStretch is a flexibility tool designed to provide stabilization and isolation while stretching the lower extremity musculature. ProStretch is recommended to the patient for preventative measures as well as a treatment technique.

Diagnostically, when a patient presents with an apparent musculoskeletal problem such as low back pain, the clinician should use a flexibility evaluation to assist in determining the cause of the muscular problem. Muscular imbalance is a combination of antagonist muscle groups that are too tight and too weak. Muscular imbalance can be a leading cause of various musculoskeletal pathologies including low back pain, impingement syndrome, and medial tibial stress syndrome. For example, the imbalance of tight hamstrings and weak back extensors or tight hip flexors and weak abdominals can place added stress on the lower back, which can contribute to pathological conditions such as disc herniation, spondylolisthesis or chronic muscular strain. ProStretch enables the patient to isolate a stretch on the hamstring musculature to help decrease back pain. ProStretch can also be prescribed to aid in preventing or treating muscular imbalances such as "shin splints". ProStretch isolates the gastrocnemius

and soleus musculature and provides a solid static stretch along the entire muscle belly and tendons. At the same time, ProStretch can be prescribed to strengthen the anterior tibialis musculature to prevent a muscular imbalance between the gastroc/soleus group and the anterior tibialis muscles, often a cause of "shin splints" in athletes.

The clinician should make the flexibility exam an integral part of every musculoskeletal evaluation. For example, when evaluating "shin splints", a flexibility evaluation of both the gastrocnemius and soleus musculature should be included. Often by determining the "flexibility factor" involved in the pathology, the treatment program is obvious.

When formulating a treatment program for a musculoskeletal problem, a flexibility program should always be included as an integral part of the plan. By increasing the patient's flexibility around the injured area, significant stress is reduced from the surrounding tissue. Proper flexibility reduces the stress on the involved joints as well as reducing the effects of muscular imbalance on the body.

While stretching may be prescribed as a vital part of the rehabilitation process, many patients do not spend the appropriate amount of time stretching. Finding ways to increase patient compliancy with their home program has always been a challenge for the clinician. ProStretch, a unique flexibility tool, improves patient compliancy with home programming by making stretching a fun and enjoyable experience. The ProStretch positions the foot in the most desirable position to stretch both the gastroc/soleus musculature as well as the plantar fascia. Additional flexibility exercises may be performed with the ProStretch including hamstring and anterior tibialis stretching. Since ProStretch is lightweight and portable, patients are able to take it with them to the health club, tennis court or even out of town. Improving patient compliancy with rehabilitation programs will always be an issue, but ProStretch helps insure that lower extremity flexibility will be taken care of.

*Deborah Wieder Singer, MS, PT, ATC, is in private practice and is a sports medicine columnist for Rehab Management Magazine.*