

Mens's Health

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does it work?

The Step Stretch

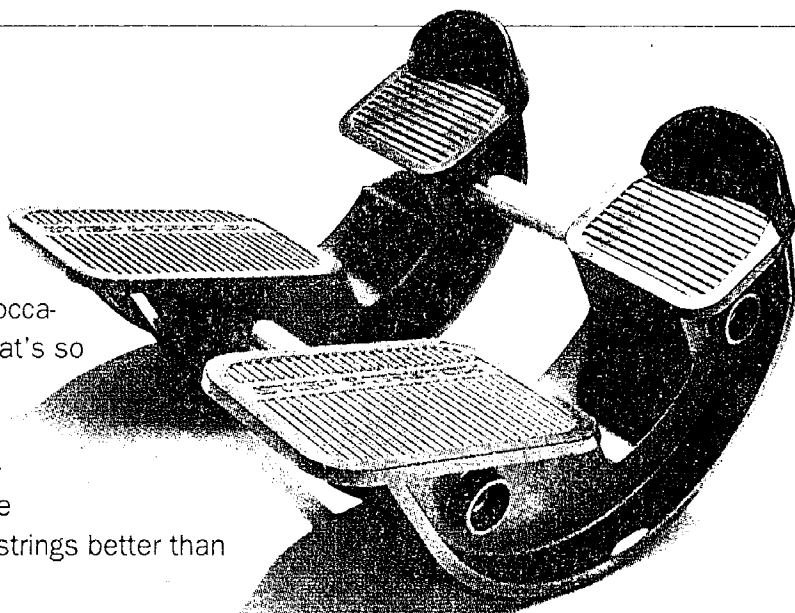
Usually in this space we take our shots at health, fitness and grooming gimmicks. But occasionally we come across a fitness product that's so good we want to take it home. The Step Stretch from Prism Technologies is one example. It's an arc-shaped, rocking foot cradle made of durable plastic that stretches the muscles of the feet, ankles, calves and hamstrings better than we've ever been able to do on our own.

Recently, Prism Technologies redesigned the Step Stretch (formerly called the ProStretch), adding a second foot cradle so you can stretch both legs at the same time. It's a huge improvement over the single-foot version, which took a little getting used to. The twin version is far more stable and a lot easier to balance on. To use the Step Stretch, place it on the floor an arm's length away from a wall. Leaning slightly forward into the wall for support, position one foot, then the other, on the cradles. Now slowly let your heels rock back, and hold the stretch for 60 seconds. Do three sets, resting in the neutral position for five seconds between sets.

"The big advantage of Step Stretch over slant boards and hanging your heels off a step is that it supports your entire foot so you don't put undue stress on the ligaments of the foot," says John Andersen, head trainer for the San Antonio Spurs.

Andersen also says the device is the most effective way to stretch the *plantar fascia*, the band of connective tissue that bridges the arch of your foot. "The angle of the device forces you to extend your toes, which makes for a more efficient stretch."

Another thing we liked about the new Step Stretch: By placing most of your weight on one foot, and using the toe of the other to gently press the rear of the device, you can achieve a deeper stretch. That's something you can't do with the older version. Step Stretch 200 is available for \$49.95 (plus shipping) by calling (800) 535-3629.



TO AVOID A FLOOD OF INJURIES,
CLIMB ABOARD THE ARC—AND GIVE
YOUR CALVES, ANKLES, HAMSTRINGS
AND FEET A PERFECT STRETCH.