

## Stretching Facts

1. Stretching is a fundamental way to improve overall health and fitness.
2. Stretching can decrease pain and soreness after exercise, also known as DOMS (delayed onset muscle soreness).
3. A little as 10 minutes of stretching three days a week can improve posture, circulation, and range of motion.
4. It is imperative to stretch correctly; improper technique may provide little-to-no effect on range of motion and flexibility and could result in serious injury.
5. Static stretching, which involves gradually stretching through a muscle's full range of movement until a resistance is felt, is considered the safest technique.
6. All factors considered, women tend to be significantly more flexible than men at all ages (youth to adulthood). As we age, both men and women tend to lose flexibility, although such a decrease is often attributed to inactivity rather than the aging process.
7. Stretching is most effective after a brief warm-up; warming up allows an increase of blood flow and raises muscle temperature, two factors that are vital for muscle elasticity.
8. At some point, back pain affects an estimated 8 out of 10 people; stretching improves the extension of muscles and other soft tissues of the back, which can reduce back stiffness and improve range of motion.
9. Approximately 44 million Americans have been diagnosed with osteoporosis, and it is estimated that one in two women and one in four men will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime. This risk can be significantly minimized with stretching exercises that increase range of motion and flexibility.

*Sources: National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases; Physical Activity Instruction of Older Adults by C. Jessie Jones; U.S. National Library of Medicine.*