

FLEXIBILITY

FLEXIBILITY describes the range of motion in your body joints.

JOINTS are formed when two bones come together. The main body joints include the neck, shoulders, elbows, waist, hips, knees and ankles.

CARTILAGE acts as a cushion between bones. **LIGAMENTS** and **MUSCLES** bind and stabilize body joints.

LIGAMENTS are tough fibers that hold the joint in alignment. Ligament fibers are not very elastic, and overstretching them damages the joint stability.

MUSCLES are elastic fibers. Gradually stretching them improves joint flexibility.

THE MAIN PRINCIPLE OF FLEXIBILITY STRETCHING IS *PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD*

TO IMPROVE FLEXIBILITY THE MUSCLES MUST BE STRETCHED GRADUALLY BEYOND THEIR NORMAL RANGE

Planning a stretching program:

- Include exercises for the entire body. Concentrate on the neck, shoulders, lower back, groin and hamstring muscles.
- Learn to stretch within your personal limits, without straining. Don't compare yourself with others. Remember, everyone is different and stretching is not a contest.
- Hold a mild stretching position for 20-30 seconds. **DON'T OVERSTRETCH!**

There are two types of stretching:

ACTIVE STRETCHING uses jerking, bobbing, or bouncing movements.

PASSIVE STRETCHING puts the muscles in a mild stretch and holds that position for 20-30 seconds.

ACTIVE STRETCHING OFTEN CAUSES MUSCLE SORENESS WITH ITS BOUNCING AND JERKING.

PASSIVE STRETCHING IS SAFER BECAUSE IT PUTS LESS STRAIN ON THE MUSCLE.

YOU CONTROL THE MUSCLE OVERLOAD WITH PASSIVE STRETCHING.