

PHYSIOTHERAPIST DAN JONES ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS



Q I am a keen runner and have recently increased my training load in preparation for the Cardiff Half marathon. Since I started doing extra millage I have found that my legs have become tighter, particularly my thighs and hamstrings. Can you please suggest some exercises to help me stay injury free before the race?

A There is a balance between strength, endurance, and flexibility. One way stretching benefits your running is through improved flexibility: your stride length increases allowing you to run faster with no additional energy. The following stretches take only a few minutes and may lead to increased flexibility, reducing your risk of injury.

1. Quadriceps stretch

Tight quadriceps will decrease your back kick and shorten your stride. By stretching the quads, you help the hamstrings pick up your heels as you toe off.

Balance on one foot or hold onto a nearby object and keep your knee pointed down with your torso perpendicular to the ground. Push you pelvis forward for an extra stretch.

2. Gastrocnemius stretch

Keep the back leg straight and push the back heel into the ground. Keeping a straight upper body and gently lifting up your hips helps. There shouldn't be much pressure on the front foot.

3. Hamstring stretch

Keep your front leg straight, whilst flexing your opposite leg at the knee. As you move your trunk forward maintain a straight upper body and push your pelvis backwards.

The above stretches are designed to work on the major muscles involved in the discipline of distance running. Regular compliance with a strict stretching programme can increase your running speed whilst reducing the risk of injury. Please follow these guidelines to ensure correct technique

Follow these guidelines to ensure correct technique:-

- Avoid stretching cold muscles. When muscles are cold, it's easier to tear the muscle fibres' that you are desperately trying to protect.
- Walk or jog 5 minutes to get blood to the area, wear sweat pants or tights and try to stretch where it's warm.
- Ease into each stretch: don't bounce or force it. Stretch to the point of discomfort, not pain.
- Breathe comfortably and let the muscle group relax. As it relaxes, it will stretch.
- Hold each stretch for 30 to 45 seconds.



If you have a question for Dan, send an email to info@healthandsports.co.uk with the subject of 'Physio Q&A'. All enquiries will be treated in the strictest confidence and no names will be published in the magazine.
Telephone : 02920 762000 www.healthandsports.co.uk

Health & Sports Physiotherapy Ltd 50-52 Station Road, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5QP

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