

Essentials of warming up and cooling down

Prior to exercise you should always remember to prepare your body for the work about to be done. This is called a warm-up. We advocate warm-ups for many reasons:

- Ready your heart for the workload about to be done
- Increase your body temperature, decreasing your chance of injury
- Lubricate your joints by releasing a substance called synovial fluid
- Mentally prepare you for your workout
- Allow your blood vessels to dilate, thereby properly feeding your heart with blood and decreasing your chances of angina

When warming-up you should use the larger muscles of your body dynamically and rhythmically. A warm-up is a slow progression towards your target heart rate. This should take anywhere from 10 – 15 minutes gradually increasing your workload as you go. A good idea for a warm-up is a lighter version of what you plan to do – so the muscles specific to the activity are ready to go. This could be slow gentle walking, riding the stationary bike without setting it or not putting any resistance on the weight training equipment and just going through the motions for 15 – 20 times. Stretching is not a proper warm-up. It is best to stretch after your core temperature has risen (eg after your warm-up). The muscles will respond the same as silly putty if stretched too deep when cold. Silly putty when not worked will simply pull apart when stretched to it's maximum and when kneaded and worked, it becomes more pliable and less likely to break. The same goes for your muscles. Another good time to stretch is to incorporate it at the end of your cool-down.

The cool-down is very important because it:

- Decreases your chance of muscular soreness the next day
- When you stop suddenly after a work-out you run the risk of blood pooling in the legs causing lightheadedness due to the drop of blood pressure
- It places too much stress on the heart to stop suddenly
- Aids in relaxing you physically and mentally

After a work-out a 10 – 12 minute cool-down is recommended. During this time, you will slowly and gradually decrease the intensity of the activity back down to the feeling of "easy". The best cool-downs are whatever will keep your feet moving for a minimum of five minutes and keeps the arms below shoulder height. Remember when exercise is properly done in the order

prescribed, warm-up, aerobic and cool-down your body and your heart will
thank you for it.

Good luck and happy training.

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