

Fitness Together

1 Client 1 Trainer 1 Goal

Flexibility

What is flexibility? Well, in any introductory course about exercise one learns that flexibility is one of the five components of health related fitness. More specifically flexibility may be defined as the ability to move a joint through an optimum range of movement.

Often flexibility is thought of as the sit and reach test we all did in elementary school. Certainly, this is a legitimate method for measuring low back and hamstring flexibility; however, the best way to think about flexibility is in terms of being able to move the body in the planes of movement consistent to normal human activity and specific to one's individual activity preferences.

How can one develop the flexibility needed for every decade of life and for the specific activities one enjoys? Stretching is a piece of the puzzle but not the whole answer. First of all it is important to understand that more flexibility is not always best. Too much flexibility or too little flexibility will make one injury prone. Therefore, the key to healthy flexibility comes back to being able to move the body in planes of movement common to normal human activity and specific to individual activity preferences. This is achieved primarily through the following two avenues core strength and muscular balance.

Core strength refers to the “core of the body” or abdominals, internal/external obliques, and spinal erectors. The body is a chain of three links upper body, core (middle body), and lower body. If a chain of three links is compromised at its middle link then all links are compromised. The core of the body is the key to creating the freedom to move in all planes of movement. Therefore the first step to developing flexibility is to develop core strength through a variety of abdominal, oblique and low back exercises.

Muscular balance is the other key. Muscular balance refers to protagonist and antagonist muscles being in balance. Each muscle has an opposing muscle, for example the tricep and bicep or quadricep and hamstring. When opposing muscle groups are strong and proportionally in balance, flexibility and range of movement are achieved. If one lacks core strength and balance in opposing muscle groups then one could stretch all day long and not improve one's flexibility and range of movement.

Some people are naturally very flexible and others are not; however, all people can improve their flexibility and make their body more functional in terms of its ability to move in different planes of movement. A simple plan to develop flexibility is to

warm up easy for 3-4 minutes walking, biking, or slow jogging. Then move into strengthening exercises for the core, upper and lower body. Finish with stretching while muscle are sufficiently warm. Make sure to never stretch a cold muscle. For more information concerning flexibility specific to your needs and activities contact Julian Kaufman at Fitness Together.

Julian Kaufman owns Fitness Together a personal training studio with private suites and nutrition plans. Fitness Together is located in North Chattanooga on Frazier Avenue near the theatre and Coolidge Park.. He earned his degree in Health and Exercise Science from Furman University, a master's from Covenant College. He is certified through the NSCA – CSCS, FFL, and USA Track and Field. For questions contact information is below.

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