



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at National Insurance Services, Inc.

Many muscle and bone injuries are the result of skipping a warm-up and cool-down before and after workouts.

FITNESS FIRST: INJURY-FREE WORKOUTS

Exercise is a great way to combat stress, lose weight and boost energy. To get the most from your workouts, you should add warming up, cooling down and stretching to your routine. These three simple steps are proven to help prevent painful and costly injuries.

Warming Up

Warming up allows your body time to adjust from rest to activity. It increases blood flow to the muscles so they stretch easily, reducing the risk of torn muscles. It also lubricates joints, which reduces friction and wear, and carries oxygen to the heart. Use the following tips to effectively warm up:

- Use movements that are similar to those you will use in your workout, such as light calisthenics, brisk walking and jogging.
- Gradually increase the intensity of your warm-up to reduce stress to your bones, muscles and heart.
- Do not overdo it. Your warm-up should be about five to 10 minutes and intense enough to cause a light sweat.

Cooling Down

After working out, you need to cool down. As with warming up, cooling down should include movements similar to those in your workout, but at a gradually decreasing level of intensity. Do not skip this step. Without a cool-down period of about five to 10 minutes, blood stays in the worked muscles without returning to the heart, which may cause you to become dizzy, nauseated or even to pass out.

Stretching

After cooling down, stretching helps to build flexibility and

range of motion. When stretching, follow the guidelines below:

- Use gentle and fluid movements (never quick or jerky), and breathe normally.
- Work specific parts of your body, maintaining each stretch for 20 to 60 seconds.
- Never force a joint beyond its normal range of motion; you should not feel any pain.
- After a workout, be sure your heart rate has returned to normal, or is less than 100 beats per minute, before stepping into a hot shower in order to reduce the stress on your heart.

By warming up, cooling down and stretching, you can prevent injuries and ensure a safe workout.