

Flexibility Training: Boost Your Performance!

One of the single most neglected areas of training is our flexibility. Strength, endurance, and explosive power are important...but how can we make our muscles even better and more efficient? Flexibility training!

When we have a larger range of motion, we can activate more muscle fibers during our workouts. Activating more muscle fibers = increased strength and muscle growth. That larger range of motion also allows us to generate more force, which is especially important for athletes. Being able to move your body in different planes and bend in certain ways decreases your chance of injury and dramatically can improve your ability to perform.

Stretching is annoying, I know that. I never finish a workout and really feel like adding another ten minutes or so to really stretch out. However, it's something we should make a priority to do. It will help us recover and serve us well long term, no matter if your goal is to become a better, more agile athlete or if you just want to be able to reduce your risk of injury and feel better.

Note this: static stretching (like the seated hamstring stretch where you bend and hold for a count) is NOT the only way to improve our flexibility. It's a good thing to do after a workout to loosen things up, but I never really static stretch before a workout. Dynamic flexibility movements are a great way to warm-up and increase our flexibility at the same time. Once we've got a little sweat going, go through some dynamic movements in different planes of motion, work to maintain good posture and form, and perform some exercises that challenge us to stretch a little. *Examples: side lunges, lunge at a diagonal, reverse lunge with a reach, wide base squats, hurdle walks, etc.* There are so many ways to dynamically move our bodies to make ourselves better!

How else can we improve our flexibility and range of motion? Foam rolling. I wrote about this a few days back. It's an awesome way to massage our muscles, make us feel better and recover faster, and break up the fascia that is creating tightness. If you haven't already, invest \$20 in a foam roller and start realizing the flexibility and health benefits.

To the average gym goer, flexibility training is an afterthought. The average guy goes to the gym, pumps out some reps, maybe does some cardio, then hits the showers. What they don't know is that flexibility training will actually help you achieve the goals you are committed to involving sports, weight lifting, agility, speed, etc.

Why not spend some time to become more flexible? It will in no way make you worse. You will increase your range of motion, be able to perform more weight training exercises effectively and properly, activate more muscles to see greater strength gain and muscle growth, become more agile and explosive, recover faster (i.e. not feel as tight the day after a tough workout), and you will decrease your risk of injury. Seems like a no brainer to me! Take a few extra minutes to do some flexibility training EVERYDAY: adjust your workouts to make this type of training more of a priority than it currently is. You won't be able to overdo it and you will see dramatic improvements in your performance and how you feel.