

Warm-Up and Cool-Down for Walking

Why do we warm-up for exercise?

Warming up before exercise prepares both the body and mind for physical activity. It is important for improving performance and reducing the risk of injury. A good warm-up should include four key components: raising the heart rate to increase blood flow, activating the muscles, mobilizing the joints, and potentiating (preparing) the nervous system for movement such as walking.

RAMP Warm-up for Walking

1. **Raise** - Increase heart rate, breathing rate, blood flow, and joint lubrication
 - Walking on the spot
 - Arm swings while walking
 - Step-jacks
2. **Activate** – Engage key muscles used for walking
 - Marching in place
 - Single leg balances
 - Heel raises & toe raises
 - Bodyweight squats
3. **Mobilize** – Improve key joints and ranges of motion used during walking
 - Ankle circles
 - Hip circles
 - Standing hamstring stretch
 - Torso twists
4. **Potentiate** – Prepare the nervous system and body specifically for walking
 - A few lengths of brisk walking
 - Gradually build up to your normal walking speed or slightly faster

QUICK TIPS

- Choose **2-3 exercises** from each section
- Perform each exercise anywhere from **30 seconds to 2 minutes**
- Remember to start slowly and gradually increase difficulty
- Look to create a warmup that takes anywhere from **5-15 minutes**. Any amount of warm-up is better than none!

Why do we cool-down and stretch after exercise?

Cooling down after physical activity helps the body—particularly the respiratory and cardiovascular systems—gradually return to resting levels. Stretching during the cool-down phase can help reduce muscle tightness and post-exercise soreness. It is also an ideal time to work on mobility and range of motion, as warm muscles and soft tissues are more pliable and responsive.

How to effectively cool down and stretch after exercise

1. Gradually Reduce Intensity

- Do not abruptly stop your activity, instead, complete 3-5 minutes of lighter, easier activity before beginning your stretching and mobility work.
- You can do this by
 - Slowing down and decreasing your exercise intensity in the last 3-5 minutes of your walk
 - Or completing a few minutes of light movement after you've completed your walk.

2. Mobility and Stretching

- **Plantar Fascia soft tissue release** – Place your **Kintec massage ball** under your arch, apply light pressure and gently roll out the muscles under the foot.
- **Big Toe stretch** – Place your **Kintec massage ball** against a wall and then place your big toe in front to have your toe point upwards. Bring your knee over and hold for 30 seconds.
- **Calf stretch** – Stand with one foot forward and one foot back. Bend the front knee and keep the back leg straight with your heel on the ground until you feel a stretch in the back calf.
- **Hamstring stretch** – Place one leg in front of you with toes pointing up and bend your torso towards your leg.
- **Quadriceps stretch** – Bring ankle towards your butt, keeping your knees in line with one another and hold with your hand.
- **Hip flexors stretch** – Hold a small lunge position, you should feel the stretch in the front of the hip in the back leg.
- **Gentle torso stretch/twist** – Standing upright gently rotate to both your left and right side, holding on each side for a few seconds if comfortable.

QUICK TIPS

- Hold each stretch or perform each mobility exercise for **30 seconds to 1 minute**.
- Move only within a range that feels **comfortable and pain-free**. If needed, modify exercises or use a support (such as a wall, bench, tree, etc.) to improve balance and stability and help reduce fall risk.