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## Try These Flexibility Stretches to Enhance Your Daily Workout

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Having a flexible body is essential for everyday life, and particularly for exercise. Think of all the things you do throughout your day that cause your muscles to tighten or create discomfort: Being stuck behind a desk, standing for long periods of time, repetitive motions, driving long distances, and exercising without properly maintaining a limber body are all ways that keep you from having a well-balanced and efficient lifestyle.

To fully optimize your workout, it is necessary to be flexible in order to perform your exercises properly — by getting full range of motion in which your joints can potentially move. Here's why:<sup>[1]</sup>

When we don't stretch before and after a workout, our muscles hold onto toxins, we risk injury, recovery time takes longer, and our performance is decreased.

In order to prevent restrictive mobility, we must do flexibility stretches.<sup>[2]</sup> Common areas that need stretching and/or flexibility are the hips, back, knees, and ankles. In this article, you will see why it is not only important to stretch, but to balance the planes of motion in which our body parts move.

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## How To Stretch

Done consistently, the following flexibility stretches will enhance your workout, you will gain greater range of motion, improve balance, and recover more quickly for your next workout.

Typically, a static stretch should be held for 20-60 seconds (International Sports Sciences Association), remembering not to overstretch which can cause injury as overstretching can cause pulled muscles and tears.

In a comfortable stretch, you should feel just a slight pull without going beyond normal range of motion. Always be aware of your breathing during a stretch.

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For example, if you are doing a flexibility movement for the knee, just before you go into the stretch, take a deep breath and then exhale once you are into the stretch. Breathing is important as it relaxes the muscles and helps to loosen them.

Your body should be warm before stretching to increase blood flow. This can be a 3-minute ride on a stationary bike or slowly-controlled, 45-60 second body weight squats.

## Hips Stretches

The hips tend to give us trouble when we get into our 40's and 50's, and the cause of pain is not always injury or over-use, but rather, lack of stretching in the hip flexor muscles.

Even if you're not a sedentary person, you walk throughout your work day, climb stairs, or stand for long periods of time, you must keep your hips flexible to keep them from tightening which can cause other problems, like lower back pain. (Everything is connected.)

Oftentimes, people who are active tend to think that because they cycle, run, or perform other exercises that recruit the hip flexors, they don't need to stretch because their hips are constantly moving; Not so. What people don't recognize is that over time these and other movements create muscle imbalances, spasms, and affect posture.

When your hips are flexible, the exercises that recruit gluteal muscles, like the squat and lunge, have better control. Take a look at these 4 hip flexor stretches by Guerilla Zen Fitness:



## Back/Spine Stretches

The back and abdominal muscles support the core and are necessary to have a strong gait. In order to have a strong back, you must open up your chest and sides of your back with various stretches.

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Sometimes, without noticing it, we rely on our back for a variety of movements, such as looking over our shoulder to pass safely in our vehicle, rising up from a chair, reaching up high for an object, etc.

These passive movements seem easy, but without a stable core, you're left with a weak spine and the movements can become challenging over time.

Having a flexible spine and strong core is great for exercises like crunches, torso circles, side bends, lying leg raises, and sit-ups.

Here are 3 spinal flexibility stretches by Strength Side:



# BACK STRETCHES



You can also incorporate regular yoga practice into your daily routine as a holistic approach to gaining flexibility in your back.

One of my favorite things about [yoga](#) is that it moves energy throughout the entire body, with special attention to the spine. In addition, yoga helps to lengthen muscles and opens up the space between the ribs and vertebrae, which minimizes tension and reduces headaches and backaches.<sup>[3]</sup>

Try these yoga poses that are not only good for flexibility but for overall relaxation. Hold each pose for 10 to 15 breaths:<sup>[4]</sup>

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## Knees Stretches

The use of our legs to walk, run, swim or do any the movement that involves the legs also involves the knees. Flexibility in and around the knee joints is essential for mobility, and because everything is connected, flexibility in the knees will also create flexibility in other areas, such as the ankles, which will I will address next.

So, if the exercises you perform on machines, such as the leg extension or leg curl, which move in the sagittal plane – that is, forward and backward or up and down – are among your go-to's when training your lower body, you must have flexible knees.

Here are 3 knee strengthening examples by Strength Side:



## Ankles Exercises

Ankles run into all kinds of problems, like walking, wearing high heels or uncomfortable shoes, flat feet, trauma, improper footing when performing exercises, arthritis, and even swimming. All of these can cause tendonitis – The inflammation surrounding tendons in the lower leg muscles.

Despite what it may look like, the foot does not remain in the same position during up-and-down movements which is why it is important to maintain flexibility in the muscles surrounding the ankle joint.

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Flexibility allows for various positions (International Sports Sciences Association). In addition to the following exercises, R.I.C.E. (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation) is also effective for relieving ankle pain. Here are some examples of how to increase ankle and foot mobility:



## Planes of Motion

Balancing your body's planes of motion is necessary, not only for weight training and other exercise, but for gaining flexibility as well.

Our body is a powerhouse because it is not limited to a single plan of motion movement, and instead has the ability to move in multiple directions – Sagittal, frontal, and transverse.

For example, when doing flexibility exercises for your back, you should also work our abdominal muscles. Similarly, when weight-training your quadriceps, you should balance them by also training your hamstrings. This creates balance, coordination, and functionality:<sup>[5]</sup>



## Bonus Tip

Keep in mind that stretching can go hand-in-hand with the use of sports medicine equipment, such as a foam roller to pre-condition tight muscles and break up lactic acid, compression apparel to maintain warmth, and even a lacrosse ball to target trigger points.<sup>[6]</sup>

Now that you are familiar with stretches where common injuries occur, you should experience relief in multiple areas of your body and in your daily life. Tension, stress, and tight muscles can now be curtailed by effective stretching before and after your activities, and your muscles will be more relaxed and efficient, thereby increasing your performance.

## More Resources About Stretching Exercises

- [15 Simple And Quick Office Stretches To Boost Work Efficiency](#)
- [Simple Stretching for Lower Back Pain that You Can Do At Home](#)
- [These 13 Leg Stretches Will Prevent Pain and Injury During Exercise](#)
- [4 Simple Desk-Based Stretches For Effective Lower Back Pain Relief](#)
- [15 Important Benefits of Stretching Before, After, and During a Workout](#)

Featured photo credit: [Annie Spratt via unsplash.com](#)

## Reference

- [1] ^ Muscle Mechanics, International Sports Sciences Association, "Fitness: The Complete Guide," page 166  
[2] ^ Flexibility Training, International Sports Sciences Association, "Fitness: The Complete Guide," page 343  
[3] ^ Top Fuel Crossfit: [Yoga Poses to Relieve Headaches: Lengthening the Spine](#)  
[4] ^ Rukmani Iyengar: [5 Yoga Asanas to Reduce Back Pain](#)  
[5] ^ Kai Simon: [How To Improve Your Workout: Planes Of Motion](#)  
[6] ^ Flexibility Training, International Sports Sciences Association, "Fitness: The Complete Guide," page 343.

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**Terri West**

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>Last Updated on January 10, 2019

## Haircare 101: Hairstyling Tricks for Both Men and Women



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Do you have a hairstyle routine? How does it look like? How often do you go to get your hair done, and how much do you spend on it? For basic hair care, most people use shampoos and moisturizers. Yet, many would like to have the hair like those people in shampoo commercials. Is that only a production trick, or can it be achieved in real life?

Turns out that it can, and it includes a plethora of products and an intensive hair care routine. You can use a hair mask, wax, mousse, gel, spray, volumizer, misc, pomade. As you can guess, this is a neverending list, which costs a significant amount, and it takes a lot of hustle. And we can all agree that we're too busy with our daily lives to concentrate on hair that much. Still, when you see a pretty guy or a girl, you can't help yourself but look with your eyes wide open.

The goal is to achieve that look without going bonkers and spend a ton of money.

## How to do it?

First of all, you need to know yourself and your style, and then to follow it. One of the fundamental mistakes people make regarding hairstyles is the wrong choice of hairstyle. You need to choose based on your head shape and your type of hair.

You simply can't have a particular hairstyle if your head and hair aren't compatible with it. [Guys – check here.](#) [Girls – here.](#) When you've picked the perfect one, you should get into the process of mastering it. Ladies first.

# Hair defines your femininity

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Through the history, the hair was a symbol of femininity. The average woman, during her lifetime, spends approximately \$50,000 on her hair and almost two hours a week, washing and styling it. It is believed that our hair represents our thoughts, personality, and beliefs.

There are dozens and [dozens of hairstyles](#) available today. The most popular hairstyles for women for short, medium and long hair are curls, waves, and straight hairstyles. Let's get into those styles in depth, so you can make them easier.

## Curls



Curls give you a bit of glamorous look ideal for every occasion. If you weren't blessed with them naturally, there are easy ways to get them. The easiest way is to do it with a curling iron. The first and the most important step is to choose a [high-quality curling iron](#). If you are going to use it on the daily or weekly basis, it is crucial to choose one that is not going to damage your hair.

Using heat protection hairsprays before curling your hair is necessary. For short hair, it's recommended to use a  $\frac{3}{4}$  "barrel curling iron; for medium hair, the 1" barrel is recommended, and for long hair, you should use  $1\frac{1}{4}$  "barrel curling iron. Then, it's all about the usage of this product. It might make your hair stunning, or burn your hair. Here's a [detailed guide on how to do it](#).

## Waves

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Wavy hair is perfect for the casual and romantic look. The process of making them is same as creating curls, but the secret is in curling iron size. For short hair, you should use 1" barrel,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  "barrel for medium hair, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  "barrel for long hair.

If you want to have loose waves, after using a curling iron just brush out the lower half of your hair or shake your head until you get the look you want. To master the curling iron, check out the [ultra-useful article from BuzzFeed](#).

## Straight



Straight hair gives you classic look and classic is always fashionable. Girls with natural curls or waves need to spend more time to get this look because they need to use a flat iron, but this process is very easy and quick. Straightening irons are very dangerous to your hair, and you should be careful while [choosing the best straightening iron for yourself](#).

Before using the iron, apply the heat protection hairspray and divide the hair into sections. The thickness of your hair determines the number of sections – more thick hair, more small sections. Wash, dry and brush your hair carefully before using a flat iron. Make sure to set your straightener to the lowest heat if your hair is particularly thin and brittle.

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With these styles covered, you are one step closer to getting a perfect hairstyle/haircut.

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## What about guys?



Since the beginning of time, it is well known that a good man takes care of himself. Remember, the single most important element of grooming, aside from basic washing and scrubbing, is your hairstyle.

Besides making you look neat and handsome, your hairstyle tells a lot about you. Men's grooming has reached a whole new level, and more and more people have been breaking out with their personal style. Here are some useful steps to get your personal hairstyle started:

## Everyday hair due on the go

When it comes to choosing an everyday hairstyle, it is best to keep the details about your life in mind. Regardless of the style you want, it should work with your personality, and you'll need to be comfortable with it. Consider all your needs, how much time you spend to style your hair, and how much effort you are willing to put in your daily look.

First of all, decide how you want your hair to look. For the most part, you'll want to keep it pretty much the same you usually wear. It all starts with the right tools.

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Of course, you won't get very far without a quality hair clipper with different guards and blades. Hair clippers are perfect for a casual maintaining at home. As a bonus, you can trim your beard and your intimate parts as well. You'll be able to save a lot of money by trimming your hair yourself, so it might be a good idea to spend more upfront to get good and long-lasting equipment. Check out this [hair clippers buying guide](#) to get informed and buy the best one for yourself.



The purchase of the right model might seem pricey at the first glance, but think of it as an investment. [Using the hair clipper](#) on yourself might seem strange or uncomfortable, but you'll get used to. Now you're one step closer to a great haircut.

## Styling



[Styling your hair](#) is the next important thing, especially if you go with the longer hair. Your hair might require styling every day, but when you get used to it, you won't even notice the process. On the other hand, you'll be rewarded with a perfect hairstyle every day. For that form and performance, you'll need some products to help you out.

## Products



Select styling products that fit you and your hairstyle the most such as gel, pomade, hair wax or hair spray. Unfortunately, most of us will need more than water and a comb to get the desirable hairstyle.

Depending on the product and hairstyle, you'll have several options to apply the styling product. Setting up your hair with the product before you comb your hair is a good practice, for most types of products, except spray.



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