

FEED THE MUSCLE, STARVE THE FAT!

# Living Lean

**THE LARRY NORTH PROGRAM**  
**IT'S NOT ABOUT PERFECTION, IT'S ABOUT PROGRESS**

**Larry North**



## ELONGATING THE MUSCLE: STRETCHING EXERCISES FOR A LEAN BODY

■ Sure, I used to hate to stretch. I always wondered, "Is this really helping my body?"  
What I have since discovered is that for those doing this program, especially those starting out, stretching can be as important as lifting weights. You have to stretch to avoid the contracted, muscle-bound look. You want to elongate your muscle, and that's only going to happen if you stretch.

One of the best ways to avoid soreness or injury is to do some basic stretching exercises at the end of a workout, when your muscles are warm. (You can even do some of these stretches while you're resting between weight training exercises.)

Using the right stretching exercises, you're giving your muscles a chance to relax and releasing body tension. Moreover, stretching will help shape your body. Your posture will improve, and you will gain greater mobility and flexibility. Instead of being the kind of weightlifter who cannot bend over and touch your toes, you will cultivate a beautifully lean, limber appearance.

In this chapter, I'll share with you a variety of stretches from which to choose. You don't have to do them all each day. Do a couple of upper body stretches one day and a few lower body the next. The good news is that you don't have to stretch for very long—no more than ten to twenty seconds per stretch. It's a myth that you need to stay in a painful stretching position for minutes at a time to gain benefit.

But always remember to stretch smoothly. Never bounce or make any movement that hurts. If you cannot touch your toes in a stretch, that's fine. Stretch as far as you can, and eventually the muscle fibers will lengthen even more. And, most important: Remember to breathe while you are stretching.

Inhale and exhale deeply as you stretch in each position. Count to three as you inhale and exhale. After getting the hang of the time interval, you will not even have to count. As you inhale, think of relaxing the muscle group, and as you exhale, think of elongating the muscle area. Breathing is very important, because it uses a natural body rhythm to stretch muscles like elastic bands. If you just pull and pull a muscle, it will give only so much. Releasing and relaxing in between will deepen the stretch.

