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Stretch it Out *by Gabe*

One of the most overlooked aspects of being physically fit is flexibility. In fact, I would be willing to wager that most every member of The Club, staff included, is guilty of bypassing and neglecting stretching. Not only is flexibility imperative for range of motion and daily quality of life, but it also is an extremely important factor in one's progression towards their fitness goals and correcting muscular imbalances. So how long does it take to see results from stretching?

First and foremost, consistency is key. Flexibility exercises must be performed on a regular basis to prevent injury, maintain elasticity in the muscles, and improve the range of motion in your joints. Flexibility exercises should be performed at least four days per week. I often recommend that clients perform their flexibility exercises six-seven days per week, and you will often find extreme athletes performing a flexibility program two-three times per day. Two times per day is not necessarily realistic for some clients, but not outside the realm of reality if flexibility is impeding your training program.

Additionally, in order for the benefits of flexibility training to translate into increased ranges of motion and elasticity, research indicates that a static stretch must be held for a minimum of 30 seconds. More often than not, individuals will perform flexibility exercises for an inadequate amount of time. Holding a stretch position for 5 to 10 seconds and then moving to the next exercise is not enough time for the benefits of the flexibility exercise to occur. However, the 30-second time-frame creates elongation in the soft tissues (i.e. muscles, ligaments, tendons) of the body, and over time will improve your flexibility.

A good guideline to developing long-term improvements in flexibility would be to stretch every other day (this depends on your level of physical activity and the demands on your joints) for at least six weeks. Keep in mind that when you stop using or stretching this new flexibility, you are likely to lose the gains you made. So, make sure stretching is an integral part of your workout.

Night Time Eating *by Zack*

Eating a balanced diet means taking in a variety of healthy foods at reasonable intervals throughout the day. But for many of us, when the sun goes down, so does our willpower. While we can maintain our sensible eating habits during the day, evenings often signal the start of an unending food fest straight to bedtime.

Most people who don't know any better eat the majority of their calories late in the day. There are several reasons these unhealthy patterns are so common. Not eating enough throughout the day will cause a drop in blood sugar making you overly hungry when you get home at night. Most people don't plan out meals ahead of time so they end up running out the door in the morning with no more than a cup of coffee in their stomach. When they get home they are ready to eat any and everything in sight. Eating as an emotional escape from stress or to beat boredom is another leading factor.

I know as well as anyone that when you are hungry at night simply eating a cup of low fat, low sugar, low calorie, cauliflower sprinkled with flaxseed is not what will help your craving. Regardless of what your trainer says we all at one time or another have some late night snacking issues. Here are some possible healthier night time substitutes that will still hit the spot. (Obviously eat in moderation.)

- ♦ Switch the large, high fat pizza for half a turkey and grilled cheese sandwich on whole-wheat bread.
- ♦ Switch the chips and dip for whole-wheat pretzels dipped in hummus or fresh salsa.
- ♦ Switch cheap Chinese takeout for a homemade chicken and vegetable stir fry.
- ♦ Switch red meat for turkey, chicken, or pork. Lean meat digests much easier and you still get protein.
- ♦ Switch a chocolate bar for a Chewy granola bar.
- ♦ For some reason a lot of people love breakfast cereal at night. Switch sugary cereal for a more wholesome one. Kashi has a whole line of low sugar, wholesome, higher protein cereals that don't taste like cardboard. Top off with some fruit or berries to make it even better.

Power of Protein *by Andrew*

Everyone knows how important a proper diet is to achieving your fitness goals; yet, it remains one of the hardest obstacles to overcome when pursuing those goals. Most people tend to focus their diet on eliminating fats or carbohydrates, as opposed to achieving a well-balanced diet plan. While excess fats and carbohydrates in a diet can directly lead to an increase in body fat, they also play a vital role in bodily functions and provide energy for your workouts. One of the easiest ways to avoid consuming those excess fats and carbohydrates, while also balancing your overall diet, is to increase your protein consumption.

Protein has a plethora of benefits to the body, yet a great majority of our clientele don't consume enough (see, we do pay attention to your food journals). Protein's most important function is muscle repair and recovery. And the repair/recovery process is one that occurs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so it becomes ESSENTIAL to constantly provide your body with protein. Even if your fitness goals don't include gaining muscle, the more muscle you maintain, the more calories you burn on a daily basis. The more calories you burn daily, the more body fat you lose in the long run.

Consuming protein has also been shown to cause chemical and hormonal responses in the body that make you feel full. These responses to protein consumption make it an ideal choice when trying to avoid high fat/carbohydrate foods, while still making sure you are consuming enough calories throughout the day. As well as helping you feel full, it is also much more difficult for your body to turn protein into body fat. Your body would rather use dietary protein for muscle function than go through the process of converting it to body fat (which is much more difficult for it than converting fats or carbohydrates).

Protein sounds great, right?! So how much protein are we talking about consuming daily here? As always, the answer depends on your specific fitness goals. For muscle gaining and maintenance, it is recommended to consume 1 gram of protein per pound of bodyweight, daily. For a 200 pound individual, who consumes 4-5 meals a day, they should be consuming 40-50g of protein PER MEAL. If weight loss is your goal, protein should still be a large percentage of your diet, but you want to aim for approximately 0.75 g of protein per pound of bodyweight. Be sure to ask your trainer for your specific protein target, as well as how that impacts the quantities of other foods you're consuming.

Lower Back Flexibility *by Jesse*

Back pain and discomfort is something we would all like to avoid, but how many of us regularly do the maintenance to prevent injury? If you are one of the few whom addresses lower back flexibility consistently, then good for you. Keep it up! For the rest of us, not stretching often enough is most likely the problem.

As we train and exercise the muscles in the lower back become tighter, the spine becomes more rigid, increasing the risk of injury. Stretching reduces back stiffness and improves your range of motion. It is also beneficial because stretching is simple and can be done several times throughout the day.

Keep in mind lower back pain is often a symptom of other tight muscle groups in the posterior chain. The gluteus maximus and hamstrings directly affect the range of motion in your lower back. Flexible glutes and hamstrings are paramount when it comes to a flexible lower back. Be mindful of the big picture when going through a stretching routine.

A few key stretches to have in the arsenal:

- Rotation in lying
- Prone on elbows
- Knees to chest
- Cat stretch/childs pose

Practice these often and your back will be nice to you. If you are not familiar with these stretches, ask your trainer. Reduce your risk of injury and keep your lower back healthy. Stretch!



STRETCH CLASSES:

MONDAY EVENING 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.
SATURDAY MORNING 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.



Get Outside *by Mike*

The sun will be here soon (hopefully, with some heat). Time to get some vitamin D and maybe a natural tan at the same time. There are limitless amounts of exercises that you can do outdoors by yourself or with the whole family. It just takes a little imagination to vary them every now and again. Here are a few ideas to exercise outside. Be sure you warm up and cool down on either side of your workout.

SPRINTING

- Intervals: You can vary your intervals with different intensities. For example, sprint 30 seconds, walk 30 seconds, repeat 5-10 times or jog for 4 minutes, then sprint for 30 seconds, walk 30 seconds, then repeat until you complete 30 minutes.
- Uphill: Make good use of any hills or mounds to sprint uphill. Pump your arms and take long strides. Walk back down and repeat 10 or more times.

TONING EXERCISES

- Pull ups. Use any bar that you can reach and grip.
- Squats/lunges.
- Push ups.
- Step ups. Find a platform you can step on to.
- Jumps. Jumping jacks, squat jumps, lunge jumps, jump on/off a platform, long jumps.

RELAXING EXERCISES

- Take a walk. This is great for your rest days. Remember, rest doesn't mean no activity.
- Biking. Go for a family bike ride or go alone.

Boost Your Salad *by Julie*

The month of March kicked-off National Nutrition Month, but you don't need a national campaign add as an excuse to enjoy quality nutrition! Instead, let it be the momentum you need to keep your already established healthy habits in motion.

With the right mix of nutrient-dense and flavor-packed combinations you can be one of the daily salad eaters who are more likely to get their recommended daily allowance of nutrients than non-salad eaters. But, when you eat the same greens with grilled chicken all the time, it's a quick way to get bored and lose interest with healthy eating. So, why not spark up your plate with a better salad? Follow this simple blueprint to break down your salad into five delicious components.

Start with Good Greens

Consider factors like spice, variety, flavor and texture. Remember that the deeper the color of the green, the richer the nutrients it offers your body. Consider arugula, spinach, dandelion greens, herbs, kale, radicchio, butter leaf lettuce, or watercress, these are all high in vitamins and fiber!

Add a Lean Protein

Leave the bacon bits and fried chicken out of this one and opt for nutrient-rich lean proteins such as grilled organic chicken, hardboiled eggs, beans, fish and tofu. Add a citrus marinade before grilling to jazz-up the flavor and offset carcinogens produced in the cooking process.

Throw in Lots of Color

Salad is so much more than julienned carrots and soggy cucumbers. Throw in array of color using radishes, berries, nuts and seeds, avocados, cabbage, onions, tomatoes, sprouts, peppers, hearts of palm, artichokes, light cheese, herbs, or quinoa. Get creative and have fun with it!

Drizzle on the Dressing

There really is no reason to drench your greens in dressing. A light drizzle of a citrus dressing, vinaigrette, or yogurt-based dressing goes along way.



Look for healthy salad recipes on *The Club's* Facebook page during the month of March. Do you have a favorite to share? Send it our way - we want to hear from you!

With the market flooded with artificial sweeteners, it's hard to decide which one is right for you and your family. Are there health risks? Are there health advantages? Here is a short guide to zero calorie artificial sweeteners.

ASPARTAME (Equal and NutraSweet)

How it's used: Equal tabletop sweetener, diet soft drinks such as Diet Coke and Diet Pepsi, some sugar-free desserts, including gelatin desserts, yogurt, and puddings.

Advantages: Tastes similar to sugar. Enhances sweet flavors, especially fruit flavors.

Drawbacks: Should not be consumed by people with phenylketonuria (PKU). Controversy continues about whether aspartame is linked to increased cancer rates. Government agencies say it is safe. A recent study from an Italian cancer institute found more lymphomas and leukemia in rats fed very large amounts of aspartame. The CSPI recommends avoiding it.

SUCRALOSE (Splenda)

How it's used: Splenda tabletop sweetener and baking products. Also in yogurt, fruit juices, ice cream, dairy products, some diet beverages, and flavored waters, sometimes combined with Ace-K.

Advantages: Consumer groups have not raised the safety concerns with sucralose that they have with other sweeteners. Can be used in baked goods more readily than other artificial sweeteners. No effect on blood sugar levels.

Drawbacks: Although better suited for baking than other artificial sweeteners, it's still not a perfect substitute for sugar.

STEVIA

How it's used: Dietary supplement and tabletop sweetener.

Advantages: Less is more. Stevia is much sweeter than sugar, so less is needed. It is an option for people with diabetes as it does not affect blood sugar levels.

Drawbacks: Some extracts have a bitter taste. It is billed as "natural," but technically is processed.

So the next time you are enjoying your favorite artificially enhanced low carb option. Look at the label and see which artificial sweetener your food has in it. Then ask yourself if this is the product you want in your body. Weigh the pros and cons and make the best choice for you.



Join us for BOOTCAMP

SATURDAY MORNING

8 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Why boot camp? Well, at *The Club*, we are always looking at different ways to help you achieve your health and fitness goals. Our workouts will work your entire body, increasing endurance, burning calories, and improving your overall health.

Boot Camp at *The Club* is FREE for everyone, not just members, so bring a friend along for the fun!



We're on Facebook!

Not a friend on Facebook yet? "Like" us today and look for new recipes and tips to stay lean, healthy and fit, as well as schedule updates and *Club* news!

Just search "*The Club at Gig Harbor*" in the Facebook search bar, look for the logo and click "like".