



A Stretching Guide

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STRETCHING GUIDE

In the last article, “Our Back, Our Seat, Our Ride”, we saw how important it is to maintain mobility in our low backs, pelvis and hips. Lumbar mobility is vital to develop a correct seat and to reduce repetitive strain injuries. Stretching can be an essential tool for lumbar mobility. A regular stretching routine can help to minimize muscle imbalances, prevent repetitive injuries and improve performance¹. In my practice, each person receives a specialized stretching and strengthening program designed around their specific imbalances, injuries and activities. In this article we will discuss a generalized stretching program that would benefit the majority of riders.

When is the best time to stretch?

After you have warmed up and are relaxed! To get the most benefit from your stretches, you should do a general body warm up of about 5-10 minutes. Any activity that gets your heart rate up for that time period is sufficient. These activities can include a light jog, jumping jacks, chasing that naughty pony in the field you’re trying to catch and/or curry combing out all that fur and mud!

What kind of stretching should I do?

Riders should do both dynamic and static stretches to prepare for the specific requirements of our sport. Dynamic muscle stretches are active movements that bring on a stretch of the muscle group, but that are not held at the end range (they always continue moving through range to the end point). Dynamic stretches are used to prepare the muscles for rapid contractions and increase blood flow to the muscles. Static stretches, with long, slow holds at the end of range, are better to maintain mobility after an exercise during the cool down. Studies have shown that dynamic stretches should be done before activity while static stretches are to be done during cool down^{2,3,4}. Static stretches done before an intense activity can impede performance while dynamic stretches improve the range of motion, and can increase blood and oxygen flow to soft tissue prior to exertion.

Rules for Dynamic Stretching

- Warm up the body first and stretch the muscle while it is still warm
- Move through YOUR range of movement - keeping control of the movement with your muscles. Don’t let momentum “fling” or “throw” you through the range.
- You may feel light resistance during the motion but NEVER pain
- Start with slow, low-intensity movements and gradually progress to full-speed movements through range. Repeat 10-15 times.

Rules for Static Stretching

- Stretch while your muscles are still warm from your work out or your ride



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- Slowly take the muscle to the end of your range stopping when you feel mild-moderate resistance
- Hold the static stretch at the end of your range – do not bounce
- Hold the stretch for 30 seconds - 1 minute. Repeat 3-4 times.

Lower Extremity focus

1. Static
 - a. Groin/Hip Opener
 - b. Quad/iliopsoas
 - c. Hamstring/gastroc
2. Dynamic
 - a. Knee to chest hug - glutes
 - b. High kick-hamstring, calfs - engages core as well
 - c. Hip flexor folds (as taught by Sandra) but at a faster speed
 - d. Step lunges

References:

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3. Mann, Douglas, Jones Margaret 1999: Guidelines to the implementation of a dynamic stretching routine, Strength and Conditioning Journal:Vol 21 No 6 pp53-55
4. Taylor Tollison. Modern Stretching. <http://www.elitesoccerconditioning.com/Stretching-Flexibility/ModernStretching.pdf>