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Cool-Down Directions

When your training, practice or sport session is complete, you should always cool-down. A good cool-down allows your body to gradually return to a state of rest.

A typical cool-down includes:
1. Light aerobic activity
2. Static stretching

The aerobic activity in a cool-down should decrease in intensity. It could be a light jog, moving into a brisk walk and finally ending to a slow walk.

After you complete the light aerobic activity, you will want to stretch. Stretching for flexibility is very effective in the cool-down.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE
- Hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds.
- Stretch both sides – if you stretch your right shoulder muscle, stretch the left!
- Stretches should be performed to mild discomfort, but should not be painful.
Sample Cool-Down

LIGHT AEROBIC ACTIVITY
The light aerobic activity in a cool-down should decrease in intensity. It could be a light jog, moving into a brisk walk and finally ending to a slow walk.

STATIC STRETCHES
Unlike dynamic stretches, static stretches consist of one position that is held in place. If you don't have enough time, select a few that focus on the different muscles used in your sport:

- Butterfly Stretch
- Calf Stretch
- Cross Arm Shoulder Stretch
- Figure Four Stretch
- Hamstring Stretch
- Knee to Chest
- Quadriceps Stretch
- Rounded Back Stretch
- Wrist Flexion and Extension
Butterfly Stretch

DIRECTIONS

• Sit on the ground with the bottoms of your feet touching each other.
• Let your knees fall toward the floor. Your feet should be close to your body.
• Sit tall and lean forward over your feet.
• You should feel a stretch in your groin.

Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Robbie Albano
Calf Stretch

DIRECTIONS

- Stand facing a wall. Put your hands against the wall at shoulder height.
- Put one foot in front of the other.
- Bend your elbows and lean in toward the wall. You will feel a stretch in your calves.
- Keep your knee straight and your hips forward. Make sure your heel stays on the ground.
- Switch your feet and repeat the stretch.

Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Christa Bleull
Cross Arm Shoulder Stretch

DIRECTIONS

• Cross your left arm across your chest with your elbow slightly bent. Make sure to keep your left shoulder down away from your ear.

• Place your right hand on the back of your left arm just above the elbow. Pull your left arm in toward your chest until you feel a stretch. Repeat with your right arm.
Figure Four Stretch

DIRECTIONS

• Lay on the ground with your right knee in the air.
• Put your left ankle on top of your right thigh.
• Grab underneath your right thigh. Pull your thigh towards your chest. You should feel a stretch in your left hip.
• Switch legs and repeat the stretch.
Hamstring Stretch

DIRECTIONS
• Stand tall with your left foot a few inches in front of your right foot. Lift your left toes.
• Bend your right knee slightly and lean your body forward.
• Reach for your left toes with your left hand. Keep your right hand on top of your right thigh for balance and support.
• You should feel a stretch in the back of your left leg.
• Repeat the stretch with your right leg forward.

NOTE: You can also do this stretch kneeling on the ground.
Knee to Chest

DIRECTIONS

- Lie on your back with your legs straight.
- Bring your right knee toward your chest.
- Wrap your hands underneath your knee. Pull your leg closer to your body until you feel a stretch in the back of your right thigh.
- Repeat the stretch on your left leg.
Quadriceps Stretch

**DIRECTIONS**

- Stand up tall and shift your weight to your right leg.
- Lift your left foot and hold it with your left hand. You may put your right hand on a stable surface, like the back of a chair or wall, to help you balance.
- Pull your left foot toward your body until you feel a stretch in the front of your left leg.
- Switch legs and repeat the stretch on your right leg.

**NOTE:** You can also do this stretch laying down.
Rounded Back Stretch

**DIRECTIONS**

- Stand tall and lace your fingers together with your palms facing outward.
- Stretch your arms out in front of you at shoulder level.
- Reach out so that you feel your upper back stretch. Tuck your chin toward your chest and look down.
Wrist Flexion & Extension

DIRECTIONS

• Sit or stand with your head up and looking forward.

• **Extension**: Turn your palm towards the ground. Use the other hand to pull your hand down toward the ground.

• **Flexion**: Turn your palm face up toward the ceiling. Use the other hand to pull your fingers back toward the ground.

• Switch arms and repeat both stretches.

Featuring Special Olympics athlete, Robbie Albano
Benefits of a Cool-Down

It is just as important to have a good cool-down as it is to have a good warm-up. A good cool-down allows the body to gradually return to a state of rest.

**Physical and Mental Benefits**

- Decrease heart rate
- Decrease breathing rate
- Decrease body and muscle temperature
- Returns rate of blood flow from the active muscles to resting level
- Decrease muscle soreness
- Improve flexibility
- Increases the rate of recovery from exercise
- Promote relaxation