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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
- Downward Dog
- Hamstring Stretch
- Kneeling Hip Stretch
- Knee to Chest
- Quadriceps Stretch
**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
Downward Dog

DIRECTIONS

- Start on your hands and knees. Curl your toes under and raise up your hips and straighten your legs as much as possible.
- Keep your arms and legs straight.
- Keep your toes pointed forward and let your head hang down.
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.
Kneeling Hip Stretch

DIRECTIONS

• Kneel on the ground.
• Take one big step forward. Bend your front leg.
• Push your hips forward and put your hands on your hips. You should feel a stretch in your back leg’s hip area.
• Repeat the stretch with the other leg in front.
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.
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