

THE MINIMALIST GUIDE TO FLEXIBILITY FOR RUNNERS

An easy to follow, highly effective flexibility program for runners. Minimal time – maximal benefits!

Maintaining healthy range of motion in your muscles, joints and tendons is vital to a runner's life. Regular flexibility work reduces the incidence of aches, pain and injury due to muscle imbalance and tightness, and can increase the efficiency of running form and recovery by improving blood flow to the working muscles and range of motion in the joints.

Whether you struggle for time, or just don't like flexibility exercises, following this short and simple flexibility program can make a significant difference in your running performance without a huge time commitment. Simply weave these flexibility exercises at the end of your workouts when the muscles are warm. It's easy to remember, a highly effective use of your time and will keep your running routine, and your body balanced. Who knows, you just may learn to like flexibility work along the way...

1 Catepillars



Start in push up position and push your hips up towards the ceiling into a downward dog position and hold for five seconds. Slowly walk your feet one at a time to your hands. Hold for five seconds with hands at feet (or ankles) with legs straight and feel the stretch through your hips, hamstrings and calves. Slowly walk your hands forward and into push up position and repeat for a total of 4-6 times.

2 ITB Foam Roll



Lie on your side and position the foam roll slightly lower than your hip. Put the top foot and hands on the floor for stability. Slowly roll your body with short up and back motions on the side of your leg (Iliotibial Band) from just below the hip to just above the knee. Work your way slowly down and up the side of the leg 4-6 times (down and up = one time). If you get to sensitive spot, stop and relax into the foam roll for 5-10 seconds to release the tightness.

Bonus Exercise: Rotate to roll the outside region of your thigh (quad) just above your knee joint. This can often be tight, especially for women and aid in releasing tightness that can cause knee pain (like ITB tightness can).

Progress it by --> Rolling with both legs straight and off the floor.

3 Calf Foam Roll



Sit with your hands and one foot on the floor. Straighten one leg and position the foam roller under your calf. Slowly roll from just below the knee joint to just above the ankle with short, quick up and back motions 4-6 times.

Bonus Exercise: Rotate your foot so it is straight up, angled to the right and the left to hit all the regions in the calf muscle. If you hit a sensitive spot, stop and relax into the foam roller for 5-10 seconds and continue to roll to release the tightness.

Progress it by --> When this gets easy, put the other leg on top of the leg that is on the foam roller.

4 Hip Stretch – 20 seconds



Kneel on the floor with a mat under your knee and put your right foot forward so the knee is bent at 90 degrees and over the foot.

Relax your left leg and

focus on curling your left hip up towards the ceiling.

Relax and hold for 20-30 seconds. You should feel this in your hip flexors or just above the front of your thigh. Keep your torso tall and press your hip forward and up towards the ceiling.

5 Piriformis Stretch – Hold 20 secs



Lie on your back and cross your right leg over the left leg. Pull both legs into your chest and hold. Repeat on the other leg.

Bonus-> If you like this one, try another great hip stretch by putting your right foot on the floor and resting the left ankle just below

the right knee and pull the right leg into your chest. Switch sides and repeat the stretch. Your hips will love you...

6 Chest Stretch – Hold 20 seconds



Interlock your fingers behind your lower back. Relaxing your shoulders, keep your arms straight raise your hands up toward the ceiling until you feel a stretch in your chest and the front of the shoulders. You should feel this stretch in the chest and front of the shoulders.