

Stretch It Out

Kid's Club

Staying Flexible

Making flexibility and stretching exercises a part of your daily physical activity plan will keep your body moving throughout life. Being flexible allows your body to move easily, reduces the chance of injury during an activity, and can help you relax when you feel stressed.



Tips for stretching

Cut this card out and keep it near you when you stretch.

These tips can help when it comes to safe stretching.

- ◆ Warm up your muscles before you stretch them.
- ◆ Hold still when you stretch, don't bounce.
- ◆ Try to stretch at least two to three times each week.
- ◆ Hold your stretches for 20 to 30 seconds.
- ◆ If it hurts, stop!
- ◆ Ask a physical education teacher what types of stretches you can do to improve flexibility.



Stay Away Stress!

A big homework assignment, a fight with your best friend, a hard test at school...all of these things can cause stress. You might feel tired or cranky and you just don't know what to do.

The next time you feel like this, take a stretch break.

First put on some of your favorite slow music.

Lie on your back on the floor.

Reach your hands over your head and stretch your body from your toes to the tips of your fingers. Keep breathing and hold the stretch.

Now bring your knees up to your chest. Hug your knees into your chest and stretch out your lower back that is resting on the floor.

Now roll over on your stomach. Place your hands on the floor under your shoulders. Press up, lifting the top part of your body off the floor. Feel the stretch down through your stomach muscles.

Hold each stretch for about 20 to 30 seconds. When you finish you will probably feel more refreshed and relaxed.

Ask About Classes

Group classes like martial arts and yoga are great for mixing flexibility exercises with physical activity. Talk to an adult family member or a teacher about where you can find these types of classes in your area.

Sources:

President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Get Fit! A Handbook for Youth Ages 6-17*, available online at <http://fitness.gov/getfit.pdf>.

Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. United States Department of Agriculture. *Putting the Guidelines into Practice*. October 2003.