

## Take Charge of Your Health Challenge

*Sedgwick County Health Department Worksite Wellness Program*

### Why Is Stretching Important?

Stretching can take as little as 10 minutes, but provides multiple benefits to the body:

- Decreases pain and soreness after exercise
- Improves circulation
- Improves range of motion
- Improves posture
- Decreases muscle tension
- Reduces muscle soreness
- Improves your ability to relax
- Allows time for mental training, such as visualization

Stretching comes in the form of a “warm up” and a “cool down.”

Warm Up:

- Helps to raise body temperature
- Increases blood flow
- Promotes oxygen supply to the muscles
- Helps prepare the mind, muscles and joints for the physical exercise to come

Cool Down:

- Prevents blood from pooling in your limbs
- Helps prevent waste products, such as lactic acid, from building up in your muscles
- Helps your muscles and tendons relax and loosen, stopping them from becoming stiff and tight.

Proper Stretching Techniques:

- Perform balanced stretching. This means you should always stretch the muscles on both sides of your body evenly. Don't stretch one side more than the other.
- Avoid over-stretching. Never stretch to the point of pain or discomfort. You will feel slight tension or a pull on the muscle at the peak of a stretch.
- Go slow! Always stretch slowly and evenly. Hold the stretch about 15 seconds and release slowly as well.
- Never bounce or jerk while stretching. This can cause injury as a muscle is pushed beyond its ability. All stretches should be smooth and slow.
- Don't forget to breathe! Flexibility exercises should be relaxing. Deep, easy breathing is

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*Sedgwick County...*  
*working for you*