

HEALTHY MOVES

Stretch of the Month

Calf Stretch

Why Stretch the calf muscles

The main muscle of the calf, the gastrocnemius, crosses the knee joint (behind the knee) and the ankle joint via the achilles tendon. Two very strong calf muscles blend to make the achilles tendon. Via the achilles tendon these two muscles attach to the heel bone, so they will affect how the heel reacts with the floor during walking and running.

Tight calf muscles can contribute to achilles tendonitis and also plantar fasciitis - which is pain in the heel and/or sole of the foot. This same tightness can affect knee function too.

How to stretch

- Stand with the ball of the stretching foot at the edge of a step.
- Place one or both hands on the banister or against the wall.
- Allow the heel to drop until you feel a comfortable stretch in the calf. Keep the heel in line with the toes (i.e. the foot is perpendicular to the step).
- For support place the other foot flat on the same step with a slightly bent knee.
- Hold stretch for 30 seconds. Repeat with other leg.



It is very important to use the other leg as well as your hands to have complete control of your balance and the amount of weight on the stretching leg.



correct foot alignment

Alternate Stretch

- Stand facing a wall, chair or any vertical surface that is at least as high as your waist.
- Place one foot in front of the other.
- The front, support, leg should be flexed at the knee.
- The knee of the back, stretching, leg should be fully extended.
- Proper alignment of the back foot is to keep the heel in line with the toes perpendicular to the wall or chair.
 - See picture below.
- While maintaining an erect posture gently move the hips forward - all the while supporting yourself on the wall or other chosen surface.
- The heel, of the stretching limb, must stay in contact with the floor.



For both stretches discussed in this article your weight should be mainly on your back leg, and you should feel the stretch somewhere between the back of the knee and the back of the ankle .

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Disclaimer:

Suggestions made in this publication are no substitute for medical advice. If you have any pain or difficulty performing this stretch seek advice from your appropriate health professional.