

Warm-up & Stretching to Create a Better Player

Spring is almost here that means the start of baseball and softball season.

Proper warm-ups and stretching before practice and games cannot be ignored regardless of the level of play or the age of the players. This is often neglected particularly in youth baseball and softball leagues because practice time on crowded fields is so limited that many coaches immediately begin practice without much warm-up & stretching time.

Young children generally need to learn proper fundamentals so they will not get hurt while playing the sport. Older children need to learn proper techniques so that they don't hurt themselves while playing.

Young adults require more fitness and training and are generally subject to the same type of injuries as adult athletes. Those participating in highly competitive programs will definitely benefit from both preseason and in-season training. They will require more extensive and longer warm up and stretching.

In planning fitness programs for baseball and softball players it should be remembered that these sports stress quickness and skill rather than strength and endurance. Minimum pre-practice warm ups should include stretching and mild jogging as well as gradually increased throwing intensity. Pitchers should thoroughly warm up and not throw hard until they are well warmed up.

Tips For warm-up & Stretching

The aims of stretching are to gently lengthen muscles before and after any form of exercise, and to improve tissue elasticity / flexibility. If done correctly, stretching will help prevent injuries and increase athletic performance.

Warm-up

WHY?

- to increase heat throughout the body
- to reduce risk of tearing or straining muscles by increasing their suppleness

HOW?

- 2-3 minute jog, to raise a light sweat (complete before stretching)

Stretching

WHY?

- to increase flexibility and freedom of movement
- to reduce muscle tension
- to reduce the risk of muscle and tendon injuries

HOW?

- hold stretch for 10-30sec - DO NOT BOUNCE
- repeat each stretch 2-3 times
- stretch gently and slowly, keep breathing
- stretch to the point of tension - NEVER PAIN
- select the major muscle groups used in your sport and stretch them through their full range of movement

This Should take around 10-15 minutes.

1.

Back of the Neck

Starting at your neck bend your head forward so your chin is on your chest. This will stretch the back of your neck. Do this a few times and rest about 5 seconds in between.

Hold each one about 10-15 Seconds.



2.

Side of the Neck

Keep your shoulders level then bend your neck with your ear going to your shoulder. Do not shrug your shoulder up to meet your ear. Do each side a few times.

Hold each one about 10-15 Seconds.



3.

Shoulder

This one is very beneficial for pitchers. But should be used for all players. Move your arm across your chest and with the other arm grab the elbow and pull the arm so you feel the muscle stretching in the shoulder. Do this a few times and rest about 5 seconds in between.

Hold each one about 10-15 Seconds.



4.

Tricep

Reach back like you have to scratch your back right below your neck. With the other hand reach around the back of your head and grab your elbow and pull down on the elbow. Do this a few times and rest about 5 seconds in between.

Hold each one about 10-15 Seconds.



5.

Waist

Stand straight up and bend at the waist sideways and run your hand down your thigh towards your knee. Make sure **not** to bend forward at all this would not stretch your waist. Do this a few times and rest about 5 seconds in between.

Hold each one about 10-15 Seconds.



6.

Groin

Take a big step forward then lean towards the front foot. Leaving the back leg at an angle. Rest your forearms on the front leg that is bent. Do this alternating legs a couple of times each. Do this a few times and rest about 5 seconds in between.

Hold each one about 10-15 Seconds.



7.

Groin

The reason for 2 groin stretches is that it is one of the easiest places to hurt. This stretch can be done by sitting down and putting the sole of each foot together. Do this a few times and rest about 5 seconds in between.

Hold each one about 10-15 Seconds.



8.

Hamstring

There is 3 different positions for this stretch. First on you reach down and touch the ground in front of you. the 2nd you reach and touch the ground between your feet. The 3rd you reach a little further back between your legs behind you. Do all 3 positions twice and rest about 5 seconds in between.

Hold each one about 10-15 Seconds.



9.

Thigh

Stand straight bend your leg back so you can reach back and grab your foot. This requires some balancing. Alternate legs. Do this a few times and rest about 5 seconds in between.

Hold each one about 10-15 Seconds.



10.

Leg and lower back

This will stretch your lower back and your some leg muscles. Sit down put one leg straight out and the other leg should be bent in towards the out stretched leg. Take the oppisite hand from the out stretched leg and touch your toes. Do this a few times and rest about 5 seconds in between.

Hold each one about 10-15 Seconds.

