



Five Benefits you didn't know about Stretching

I started stretching a little while ago while I was training for my first 10k run. My goal was to gain flexibility and ease the pain and tightness in the muscles to improve my running endurance and speed.

And besides the feeling of greater flexibility, there are so much more benefits of stretching that I didn't even know about!

Five things I discovered through daily stretching ...

1. Feeling fit and flexible

Since I started with my flexibility training, I feel calmer and have more energy throughout the day. Massage is very tiring on the body, and usually I often get tired during a full day of massage clients, but a few key stretches can really help. I can also feel it after high intensity workouts as I don't experience muscle fatigue like I used to.

2. Improving my workout techniques

Contracted muscles aren't very efficient during exercise. I feel like now that I stretch them regularly, my muscles are much more relaxed and therefore more productive during my workouts. Naturally, that leaves me with a better technique, less pressure on my back, and the exercise is much more enjoyable as a result.

3. Reducing stress

Stretching does reduce my feelings of stress and calms me down. When you stretch and breathe deeply, your whole body reacts and relaxes. A relaxed body works so much better. My muscles are able to lengthen, realign and release any pain and tension.

Since stretching calms and relaxes our nervous system, we produce less Cortisol - the stress hormone. This is important because the stress hormone makes us want to eat more, it represses "feel good" hormones, weakens our immune system, and it lowers our energy levels. An everyday stretching routine that reduces our stress levels, means we produce more of those "feel good" hormones and boosts our immune system instead.

4. Boosts focus and concentration

When you stretch and breathe, a high amount of fresh oxygen and essential nutrients are supplied to your muscles, organs (including your heart) and your brain. Through this increased supply of fresh oxygen and nutrients, not only do I benefit from a healthier body, my brain cells are nourished too. Nourished brain cells equal improved focus, better concentration and a happier mood.



5. An energy boost

The body uses more energy to move tight and constricted muscles. In contrast, relaxed muscles can move more freely without wasting so much of your energy. By doing a variety of stretches, you can free this built up energy like balancing your nervous system. Built up energy is un-blocked once you start stretching and nerve receptors in your muscles are stimulated.