

HEALTHY LIVING

Proper stretching regimen

helps to prevent injuries

Stretching promotes flexibility and helps all athletes regardless of age prevent injury.

To get the most benefit from a stretching regimen, muscles should be warmed-up first. Stretching should be done slowly, should not include bouncing and should be done before and after activity. The end-point of the stretch should be a five to ten-second hold when resistance is met. Each stretch should be repeated three to five times.

It is especially important to stretch the back and the



BRIAN CAWLEY

large muscles groups of the lower body. Some easy ways to do this are:

■ **Knees to chest:** Lay flat on your back, place your hands on your knees and bring your knees up toward your armpits.

■ **Back and leg stretch:**

Sit on the floor with legs extended straight in front of you and your feet flexed straight up to the ceiling. With your hands on your lower legs or ankles, roll forward aiming you chin for your legs.

■ **Side bend:** Stay seated on the floor with your legs straight and spread apart. Put both hands on one shin or ankle and roll forward aiming your chin for your leg. Repeat on the other side.

■ **Lotus stretch:** Still sitting, place the bottoms of your feet so they're flat

against each other with your knees out to the sides. Put your arms on your knees and gently push your legs toward the floor.

■ **Quadriceps stretch:** Stand and hold onto a chair or wall with one hand; with the other hand pull the lower leg on that same side up toward your buttocks. Repeat on the other side.

■ **Hamstring stretch:** Stand with your legs crossed and feet close together. Bend forward. Next, cross your legs in the other direction and repeat.

■ **Side lunge:** Stand with

your legs apart with one foot pointing out to the side, keeping your back straight lean over that foot and return to the starting position. Repeat on the other side.

It's important that an athlete recovering from an injury consult an athletic trainer or physical therapist before beginning a regimen. As always, if you have any questions contact your health-care provider.

Brian Cawley, PT, MBA, is director of physical medicine with the Windham Hospital Rehabilitation Network.