

**NATIONAL PLAYER
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

Golf Flexibility

Why & how to improve your flexibility for better golf performance

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Greg D. Wells, Ph.D.



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Flexibility for Optimal Golf Performance

What is flexibility?

Flexibility is generally considered to be an important component of sport performance, injury prevention, and optimal health. This is of particular importance to the sport of golf, where free movement is critical in developing optimal swing mechanics and clubhead speed.

The importance of flexibility in golf

“If you look at some of the players on tour who can really bomb it--guys like Hank Kuehne and Charles Howell--they're not the most physically intimidating athletes. But they all are very flexible players who can generate tremendous clubhead speed while swinging in balance. That's also one of the keys to my power. I'm convinced that if you increase your flexibility, you'll add power to your swing.”

- Tiger Woods



Flexibility for Optimal Golf Performance

Flexibility for Golf

Flexibility in golf must focus on developing and maintaining an optimal range of motion about the shoulder joint, the spine, the pelvis and hips, and all though the leg muscles and joints. Rotational flexibility is very important in many aspects of the golf swing.

Stretching for Golf

Stretching is a technique to increase the range of motion within a muscle – tendon unit. The goal is to improve and maintain flexibility. Stretching is also an effective method of preventing injuries to muscles ligaments and tendons. 5-10 minutes of warming-up should be performed before stretching.

We recommend that a) all stretches be held for at least 20 – 30 seconds, b) the athlete must breathe continuously and smoothly during all stretches, c) stretch to the point of tension, not of pain, and d) incorporate stretching into the daily practice routine, and example of which is presented at the end of this section.

The routine that follows can be used on a daily basis to improve your flexibility and also as a warm-up before you play or practice.



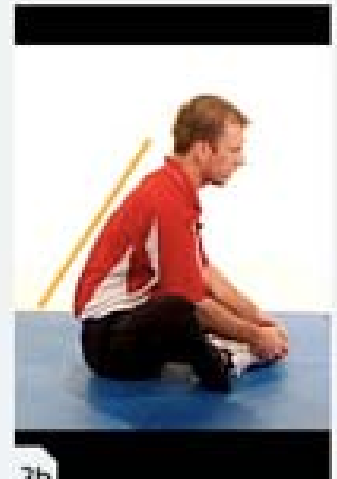
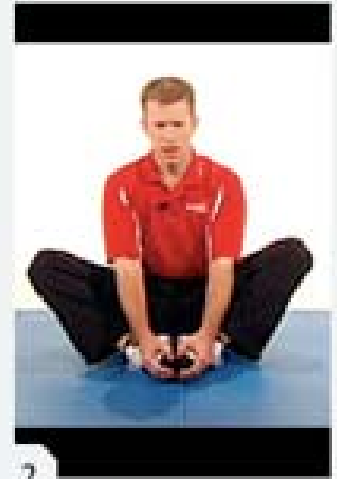
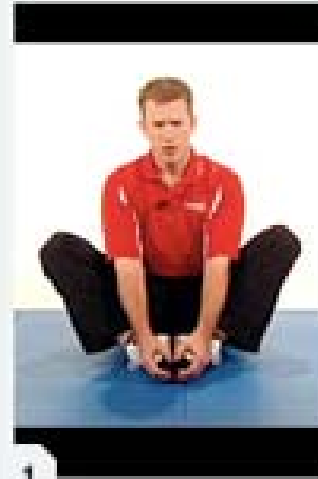
Butterfly Stretch

Begin this drill by sitting down and bringing both feet together out in front of you. Grab ankles and try to place the soles of both feet together. Allow both knees to fall gently to the floor. While doing so, bend slowly forward from the hips with an erect spine angle. This will allow for a stretch of the hips and groin. The closer will feel. Always perform stretches in a slow and controlled manner.

Instructions

Set 1: 15 seconds

Set 2: 15 seconds



Cats and Dogs

Start in the quadruped position (all fours) with your thighs and arms perpendicular to the floor. Without bending your elbows, lift your head and try to lower your spine as far as possible creating the dog position. Now, lower your head and lift your spine as far as possible creating the cat position. Repeat this back and forth for the prescribed amount of time.

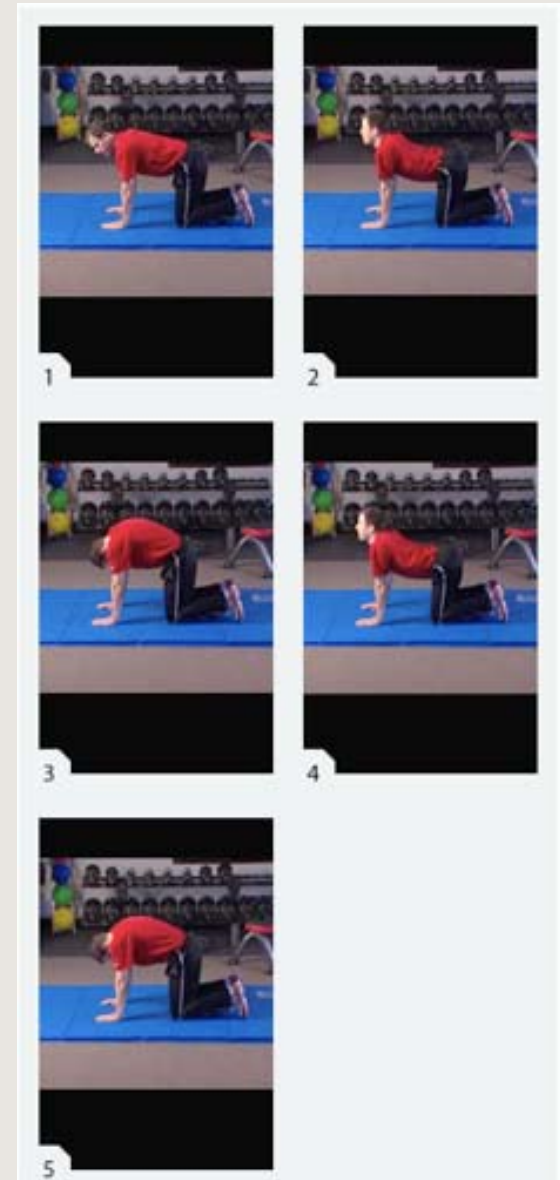
Instructions

Set 1: 4 times;

hold for 5 sec in each position

Set 2: 4 times;

hold for 5 sec in each position



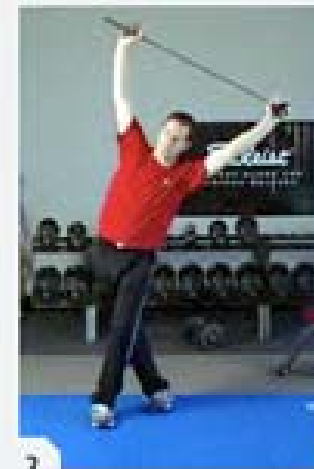
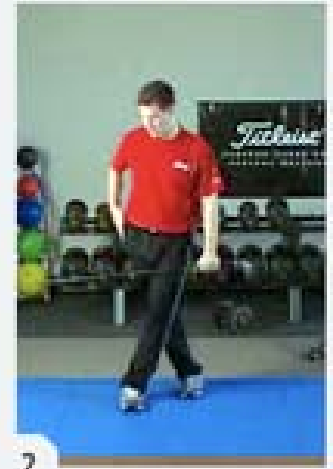
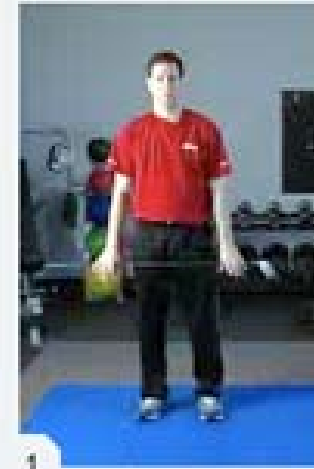
Cross-Over Stretch

Grab a golf club and place your right foot behind or crossed behind your left foot. Extend the club in the air as high as you can go and lean to your left stretching your TFL or hip muscles. Switch legs and stretch to the other side.

Instructions

Set 1: hold each side for 10-20 seconds

Set 2: hold each side for 10-20 seconds



Dynamic Hamstring

Start by lying flat on your back with your legs extended. Bring your left knee up towards your chest until your thigh is perpendicular to the floor. Grab your left thigh with both hands to help stabilize your leg and try to extend your left leg completely from the knee. Make sure your right leg stays extended and your left thigh stays perpendicular to the floor. Repeat on both sides.

Instructions

Set 1: 5 times per leg, hold for 5 seconds each time. Use a towel around your feet for a better stretch

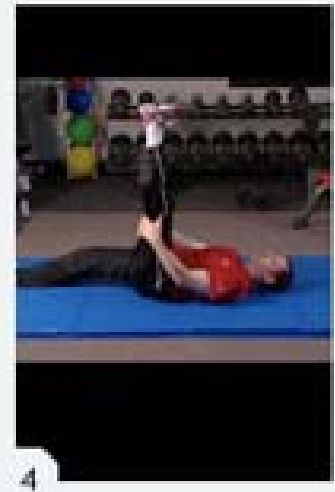
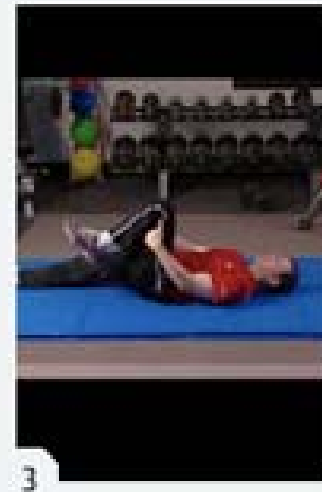
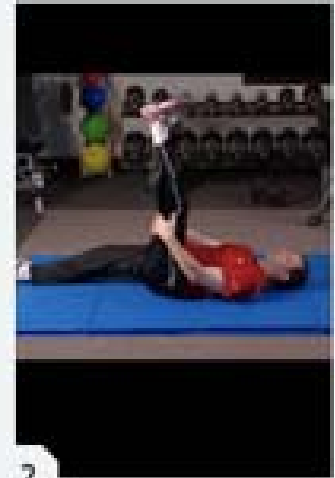
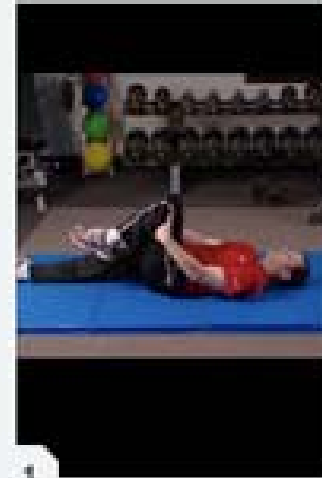


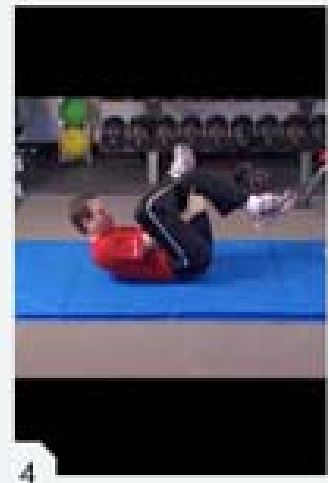
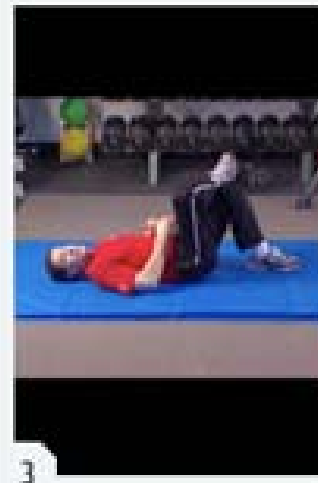
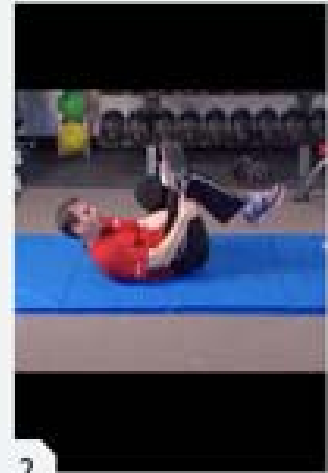
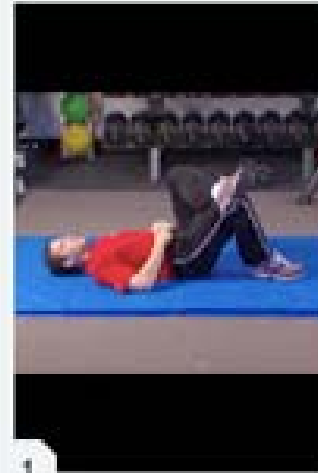
Figure 4 Stretch

Lying flat on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the ground, cross your right foot over your left knee. Keeping your right foot on your left knee, reach down and grab your left thigh with both hands and pull your knee to your chest. As your knee and foot get closer to your chest you will get a great stretch in your right hip and piriformis. Repeat on both sides.

Instructions

Set 1: 3 times, hold for 10-20 seconds

Set 2: 3 times, hold for 10-20 seconds

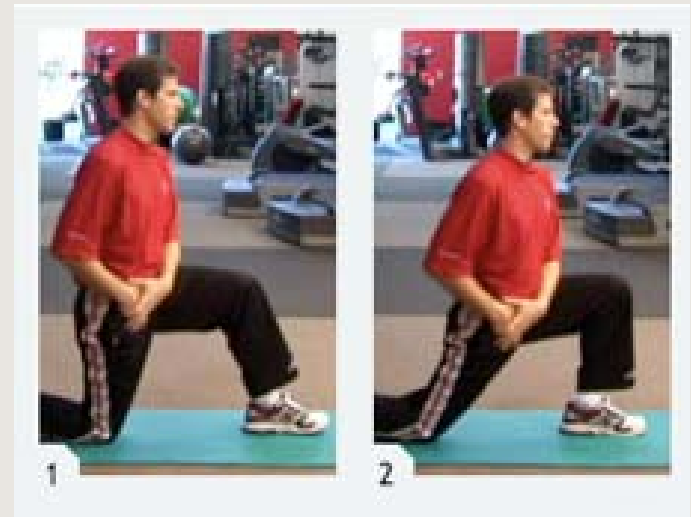


Hip Flexor Stretch

Start in the half-kneeling position with your right knee down and your left foot forward. Take both hands and place them on your right hip. Keeping your spine neutral and using your hands to prevent any rotation of the pelvis, slowly lunge forward until you feel a big stretch in the hip flexors. Try to stay tall throughout the exercise.

Instructions

Set 1: 3 times, hold each side for 10-20 seconds

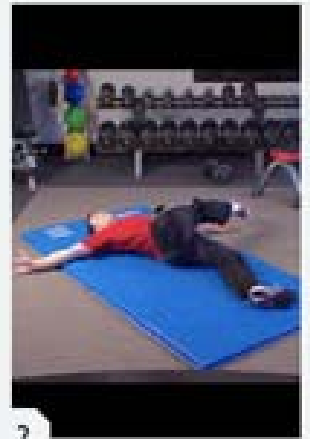


Leg Overs

Lying flat on your back with your legs extended and your arms out to your side, lift one leg up as high as possible keeping your knee extended. Now, try to touch you foot to your opposite arm keeping your upper body on the ground. Repeat on the other side.

Instructions

Set 1: 10 times each side (hold for 2 seconds)



Scorpions

Lie face down with your arms out to your sides and your legs extended. Keeping your arms in contact with the ground, try to lift your right foot up and touch your left hand. Bring your foot back and repeat on the other side. Only go as far as comfortable and stop if there is any pain.

Instructions

Set 1: 10 times each leg, Set 2: 10 times each leg

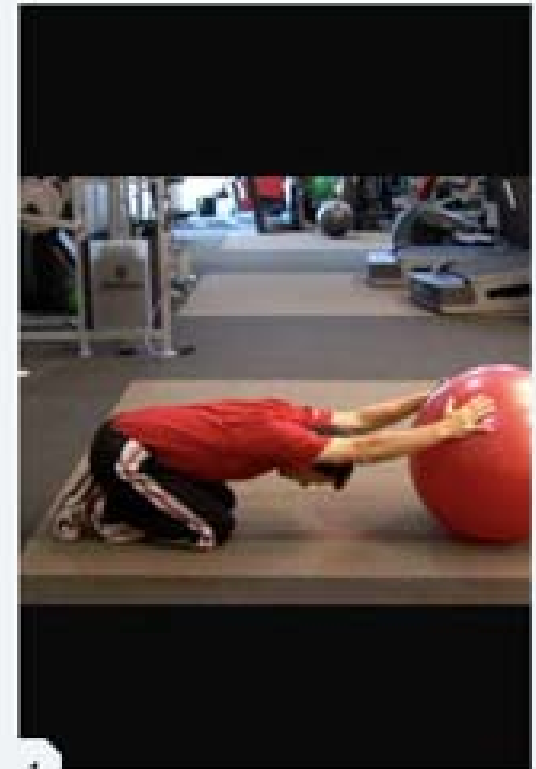


Prayer Stretch

Start by getting into a prayer position by kneeling down on the ground and sitting back onto your heels. Place both arms on a Swiss Ball and slowly roll the ball straight out in front of you. Go until you feel a big stretch in your lats and stop if there is any pain.

Instructions

3 Sets, hold for 5 full breaths each set.

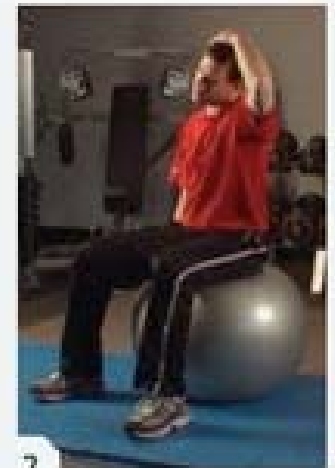
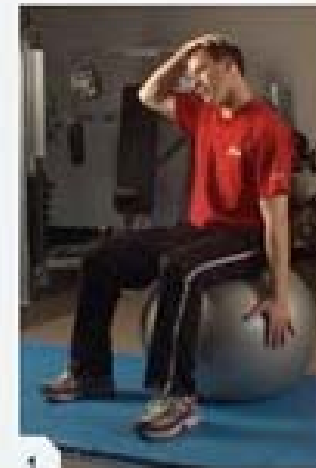


Upper Trap Stretch

Sitting on a Swiss ball, reach down with your left hand and grab below the center of the ball to help depress your shoulder blade on the left side. Now tilt your head to the right, trying to touch your right ear to your right shoulder. Use your right hand to assist the stretch. Repeat on the other side!

Instructions

2 Sets, Hold for 10 seconds on each side.



Squat and Arch

Sitting on a Swiss ball, place your arms up in the air over your head. Now roll out over the ball until your head gets supported by the ball. Drop your butt down towards the ground into the squat position, then push from your legs and arch back over the ball. Try to keep your spine as close to the ball as possible. Repeat back and forth.

Instructions

2 Sets, 15 times squat and arch on the ball. Hold for 2 seconds at extension.



Author

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Dr. Greg Wells is a medical researcher in the Department of Physiology and Experimental Medicine at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children. He is also an instructor at University of Toronto's Department of Physiology and Faculty of Physical Education and Health, and at the Canadian Sport Centre's National Coaching Institute.

Dr. Wells has served as the exercise physiologist for the Canadian Sport Centre, as a representative on the Canadian National Sport Science Committee, and works closely with Canadian National Team athletes in the area of physiological performance enhancement. His athletes, including Olympic gold medalist and Canadian Flag bearer Adam Van Koeverden, have won gold medals at Commonwealth, Pan-American and Olympic Games.

He has presented before leading sports and medical organizations around the world, including the International Olympic Committee Sports Medicine Congress, International Congress on Child Neurology and the American College of Sports Medicine.

Dr. Wells has served as the Exercise Physiologist for the Royal Canadian Golf Association and has worked with the Canadian National Golf team since 2002. He sits on the RCGA long-term player development committee and is a regular contributor to Golf Canada and Fairways Golf magazines.

He received his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto and is a professional member of the American College of Sports Medicine and the Canadian Federation of Biological Societies.

