

## Guide To Stretching

This eight-stretch routine will keep you flexible in all your main running muscles. Follow it after every run, or once or twice a week – it depends how naturally flexible you are. If you're pushed for time, try the three-minute alternatives; if you need to work more on a specific muscle, practise the deeper stretches; and once a week, try to add the whole-body stretches.

Remember:

Don't stretch cold muscles. It's far better to stretch after a run than before.

Do stretch lightly before speedwork, after a 10-minute warm-up jog.

Ease into each stretch: don't bounce or force it.

Before speedwork, hold each stretch for 10-15 seconds.

After a run, hold each stretch for 30 seconds; repeat once or twice on each leg.

### 1. a) Lying hamstring stretch with cord

Keep your upper body relaxed and both legs straight as you pull one leg towards you. A variation: lying as before, bend the upper knee in towards your chest. Holding the cord around the foot of the bent leg, push away with the foot, trying to straighten the leg against the tension of the cord. You should feel the stretch higher up the hamstring.



### Or b) Standing hamstring stretch

Place heel of leg being stretched on the floor. Make sure hips are kept square (ie facing forwards not twisted to the side). Keep stretched leg as straight as possible and lean forwards from the hip with buttocks out and back straight. Do not hunch your back or slouch forward. Place hands on thigh of bent leg.



### 2. Lying gluteal stretch against wall

Keep the ankle of your front leg just below your knee and ensure that you're close enough to the wall for your lower back to be off the floor. As gravity gently brings your lower back towards the floor, you'll feel a stretch in the muscles around the side of your buttocks. Adjust the angle of your hips and front knee to intensify the stretch.



### 3. Groin stretch

Hold your feet and gently use your leg muscles to move your knees towards the ground. Keeping a straight back and bringing your feet closer to your body intensifies the stretch.



## 4. Gastrocnemius (upper calf) stretch

Keep the back leg straight and push the back heel into the ground. Keeping a straight upper body and gently lifting up your hips helps. There shouldn't be much pressure on the front foot.



## 5. Soleus (lower calf) stretch

Stand closer to the wall and bend one leg, keeping the foot flat on the floor. You should feel a stretch in your lower calf. Leaning towards the wall intensifies the stretch; there should be little pressure on the other foot.



## 6. Iliotibial band stretch

Place one foot around the other, with both feet flat on the ground. Keeping both legs straight, lean your hips towards the side of your rearmost foot (so, if your right foot is rearmost, lean your hips to the right). You should feel the stretch down the outside of your leg and around your hip – if you are very stiff, it may take a few times before you feel anything.



## 7. Hip flexor stretch

Keep your hips squared forwards and your upper body vertical; slumping forwards reduces the stretch.



## 8. Standing quadriceps stretch

Flex your foot and keep your body straight to maximise the stretch through the front of your leg. You can put one hand on

