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Simple warm up exercises

We've all been there. Rushing to get a workout out of the way, we crank up the speed and incline on the treadmill right off the bat or jump into a strength-training circuit. Warm-up? Who needs that? 14 Things You're Probably Doing Wrong on Your RunTurns out, everyone. Skipping a warm-up could put you at risk for a subpar workout or worse: injury. "Warm-ups are important because typically we exercise after sedentary periods of time or after having just woken up," says Rebecca Kennedy, a certified trainer at Barry's Bootcamp. "It's like taking a big breath for your whole body." Warm-ups aren't just important for loosening up your muscles; they also start to elevate your heart rate and create more mobility in your joints, Kennedy says. That's why dynamic warm-ups that require fluid movement through active stretches are preferable to static stretching (e.g., touching your toes and holding for 30 seconds). Our body also needs time to prepare for bigger bouts of work, which means that 60 seconds of jumping jacks won't cut it. The smarter strategy? Spend 5 to 8 minutes warming up your body and moving your joints through their fullest range of motion, Kennedy says. With that in mind, she gave us six highly effective, do-anywhere moves that will prime you for your best workout ever. Trust us, your body will thank you later. How it works: Perform each move below in order for 60 seconds, without stopping between moves. The entire warm-up will take 6 minutes. 1. The World's Greatest Warm-Up VariationBenefits: This move wakes up your whole bod. Hips, hip flexors, hamstrings, and calf muscles all get a nice stretch, plus you'll get some ankle mobility, shoulder stability, and thoracic spine rotation. Start with feet hip width, arms raised. Bend down with a flat back and walk hands forward to high plank (like an inchworm). Step left foot to outside left hand to come into a low lunge. Lift left hand and rotate chest upward, allowing gaze to follow hand. Lower left hand and straighten left leg with left foot flexed, maintaining a flat back as you fold over left leg for a nice hammies stretch. Return to low lunge, step left foot back to high plank position, walk hands back toward feet, stand, and sweep arms overhead. Repeat on the other side. 2. Prone Chest OpenerBenefits: Stretches your chest and activates thoracic spine. Lie facedown with arms outstretched. (Keep arms in line with shoulders or slightly below.) Brace core, shift weight to right side, and lift left leg, sweeping it over right leg to touch floor. Allow left hip to come up as left hand raises straight up and gaze toward ceiling. Do each rep for 8 counts: Move for 4 counts, then hold for 4. Repeat on the other side. 3. Supine Knee CrossBenefits: Improves lower-body mobility. Lie faceup with arms outstretched. Focus on keeping shoulders flat on the ground and fingertips down for leverage. Bend right knee and bring right leg into tabletop. Move right leg across body and allow right knee to touch floor (or come as close as possible without lifting right shoulder off floor). Repeat on the other side. 4. Reverse Lunge Hip TuckBenefits: Stretches iliopsoas and activates glutes. Start with feet hip width and hands on hips. Step left foot back into low lunge. From the kneeling position, tuck hips in. (It's a small movement—not a twerk.) Return by lifting left knee to stand. Repeat on the other side. 5. Alternating Knee Hug and Ankle GrabBenefits: Stretches your hip flexors and quads, and relaxes your glutes. Stand with feet hip width. Hug left knee to chest with both hands for a count of 2. Repeat on the other side. Take hold of left ankle for a quad stretch, raising right arm for balance. Focus on pointing left knee straight down, so thigh and hip are in a straight line. Repeat on the other side, then repeat sequence. 6. Alternating Hamstring SweepBenefits: Opens your chest, promotes shoulder mobility, and stretches hamstrings. With feet hip width and arms at your side, step left foot forward and flex foot. Send hips back, keep back flat, and sweep arms down toward the ground and as far forward as possible. Then sweep arms up in a big circle, as left foot steps back into place. Repeat on the other side, moving slowly and fluidly. Special thanks to Barry's Bootcamp trainer and A.C.C.E.S.S. founder Rebecca Kennedy, who designed these moves and modeled them for us. Kennedy wears her own Nike gear. You can follow her on Instagram and Twitter, where you might catch her doing cool moves, like this handstand. Whether your workout plan is a bodyweight routine in the park or a 5K, warming up should be the first thing on the to-do list (after that pre-workout snack). But what's the ideal way to warm up? Experts agree a warm-up should heat and loosen the body, and prepare the mind for action. But there are a few moves you should avoid too. When it comes to strength training and a variety of sports, coaches often think of their warm-ups as training preparation—using techniques such as foam rolling and movement practice to get the gears aligned. Enter: the dynamic warm-up. This popular warm-up approach gets all the joints moving one at a time, then all together, taking the body through progressive movements that loosen and stretch your muscles. Classic dynamic moves include walking lunges, toe touches, and high knees. We perform optimally and better avoid injury after a warm-up that does what its name promises: warm us up. And while a marathoner doesn't warm up like a powerlifter (the same way an opera singer doesn't warm up like a modern dancer), there could be some similarities. For endurance or cardio routines, research shows a dynamic approach, including dynamic stretching — active range of motion movements that tend to be similar to what you'll do in your workout, can improve performance. Some experts even suggest performing a few short intervals of the planned exercise at a lower intensity (for example: brisk walking before running, or bodyweight squats before adding weight). As for static stretching, leave it for the cool-down. Numerous studies have shown that it can hinder performance and increase the risk of injury. Every warm-up will be different, depending on your fitness level and the goal of your workout. But as a jumping off point, start with these four basic goals for every warm-up, as outlined by the National Strength and Conditioning Association. 1. Loosen upWarm your joints, muscles, and prep your body for exercise with mobility movements. If you've got one, now is also a great time for foam rolling. Start by rolling your back, then hit every section of the legs, glutes, and hip flexors. 2. Get your heart pumpingIncreased heart thumping warms up your muscles and switches on your nervous system. Jog, slowly row, or ride a bike on low resistance. Just be sure you're able to converse with your workout buddy (or sing along to your Spotify playlist). 3. Do some dynamic stretchesStretch your warm muscles, but don't hold it. Remember: Static stretching during a warm-up can actually hinder your performance. Instead, do dynamic stretching, which involves continuously moving through a range of motion. For instance, you can make big arm circles in both directions, kick your legs forward, or simply touch your toes and then reach for the sky. The key is to not hold in any position. The Strength Moves Every Runner Should Be Doing4. PracticeMove through the exercises planned for that day's workout at a lower intensity. Have a long, hard run ahead? Warm up with a few technique drills. Back squats? Start with bodyweight squats or by holding an empty bar. Practicing the movement patterns teaches muscle memory (a.k.a. neuromuscular adaptation) and continues to prepare your body for action. There's no limit to the variety of warm-up moves that can get you game-ready, and changing things up is always a fun (and often effective) approach. Here are two of our favorite warm-ups: Find an enjoyable warm-up and remember to listen to your body's cues. Your warm-up should not fatigue you. After all, it's only one aspect of the workout. And don't forget to cool down at the end. Share on PinterestThe brain's not a muscle, but just like hamstrings or biceps, it should be warmed up and stretched before any exertion. Get those neurons firing by uttering nonsense words or playing a rhyming game. It'll make it much easier to sit down and start working efficiently. Don't ForgetUse these easy strategies to remember anythingCreative Juices: Rev up creativity for free with these quick, easy activities. It's important to warm up before working out to get blood flowing to the muscles. Warming up can help prevent injury and premature fatigue. In this article, we'll show you several exercises that warm up the entire body in one movement, including a squat and press, a plank, and a push-up with torso rotation. Do any combination of these total body warm-up exercises and you'll be ready to take on any type of fitness regimen. The squat and press is a terrific total body warm-up exercise because it involves the arms, shoulders, back, chest, abs, legs, and glutes. You'll need a medicine ball for this move. Step 1Assume starting position as shown, using a weighted medicine ball. Step 2Bend at knees to perform a squat. Step 3Straighten legs out and lift ball overhead. Step 4Repeat 10 to 15 times. For more great exercises to improve your strength and fitness, check out: This exercise involves calisthenic movements that include running and jumping. Step 1Jog for 3 counts of 8, interspersing 8 counts of jumping jacks. While jogging, remember to roll through the ball and heel of the foot on landing, keeping knees and feet aligned. Bend the knees when landing. Step 2When doing jumping jacks, begin with arms at your side. Then raise arms above head and jump simultaneously. Finally, bring arms back down to your side. Step 3Continue sets of jogging and jacks for a series of 8 sets (jogging for 24 counts, jacks for 8 counts). Repeat until you break a light sweat. Return to an easy march and breathe. Now you're ready for your first series of exercises. For more great exercises to improve your strength and fitness, check these out: Home WorkoutArm, Chest, and Shoulder ExercisesLeg ExercisesStretchingABOUT THE AUTHOR:Lisa Faremouth is a fitness specialist who is a certified exercise instructor and member of the American Council on Exercise and the Aerobic Fitness Association of America. She was awarded a silver medal in the Reebok National Aerobic 1989 Championships for the Midwest region and has served as director of exercise programs for a large health club in Chicago. Through her company, Fitfully Yours, she provides education, consultation, training, and workshops to fitness centers, corporations, and individuals worldwide. This information is solely for informational purposes. IT IS NOT INTENDED TO PROVIDE MEDICAL ADVICE. Neither the Editors of Consumer Guide (R), Publications International, Ltd., the author nor publisher take responsibility for any possible consequences from any treatment, procedure, exercise, dietary modification, action or application of medication which results from reading or following the information contained in this information. The publication of this information does not constitute the practice of medicine, and this information does not replace the advice of your physician or other health care provider. Before undertaking any course of treatment, the reader must seek the advice of their physician or other health care provider. Getty/Design by Cristina Cianci It can be tempting to skip a warm-up prior to exercising for a variety of reasons. Whether you're on a time crunch, aren't a fan of stretching, or simply want to get your workout over with, it can be easy to gloss over your warm-up and jump right into whatever movement you love most. But is this the safest practice? To get to the bottom of whether or not warm-ups can actually prevent injury (and improve workout performance), we've tapped sports medicine doctor Elizabeth Gardner, MD and celebrity trainer Jillian Michaels. Meet the Expert Elizabeth Gardner, MD is a Yale Medicine sports medicine doctor in the department of Orthopaedics & Rehabilitation. Jillian Michaels is a celebrity trainer, health and fitness expert, and the creator of The Fitness App. A warm-up is basically a wakeup call for your body, preparing your muscles for exercise, explains Gardner. "When we are seated or sedentary, many of our muscles shorten, or contract, due to our position in the chair. However when you start moving, those muscles will elongate in the new position," she says. "If this change happens too quickly, there is risk for injury." "A warm-up is a period of activity done before a workout that helps prepare the body for the demands of their chosen exercise or fitness regimen," adds Jillian Michaels, health and fitness expert and creator of The Fitness App, explaining that it should be essential prior to any exercise. "A warm-up quite literally warms the body up and raises your core temperature slightly in order to make the muscles, ligaments, tendons, joints etc. more mobile and flexible in order to improve performance and prevent injury. It also increases blood flow, which supports the body during exercise by better facilitating the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to working muscles." Contrary to misconceptions, a warm-up isn't the same thing as the form of stretching you were taught about as a kid, Dr. Gardner reveals. "Static stretching is what you likely remember from gym class—it is reaching down to touch your toes, or stretching your arm across your body to stretch your shoulder." Typically these stretches are held at the point of mild discomfort for at least 30 seconds. "However, we've learned that static stretch, when done before any activity, does not have the desired effect," she continues. "It doesn't replicate the motions and activity that you will be doing, and doesn't start to get the muscles working ahead of your exercise. This means that you aren't preventing injuries, and in fact, there is some suggestion that it can actually negatively affect workouts." Instead, your warm-up stretch session should involve dynamic stretching—performing gentle repetitive motions in a way that gradually increases motion, circulation, and muscle length. "For example, arm swings that start small and gradually increase to become bigger, but always remain within the normal range of motion," says Dr. Gardner. "You should also include motions that replicate your planned exercise, such as bounding high-knee jumps or butt-kicks if you are planning to run. Even at a low-intensity, these dynamic movements will slowly increase your heart rate and raise your body temperature. This is believed to improve the muscle elasticity and allows for more efficient cooling and oxygen exchange, thus preparing the body for the exercise that you are about to perform." According to Michaels, a warm-up can last anywhere from five to 10 minutes, and often involves cardiovascular exercise and/or the dynamic stretching Dr. Gardner discussed above. "The goal is to perform relaxed easy activity," she explains. This can be in the forms of a brisk walk around the block, a quick five minute ride on a stationary bike, or a 1000 meter row of light resistance at a moderate pace. "I also like to include dynamic stretches and or joint mobilizers like: Cat and cow, knee circles, hip circles, arm circles, bodyweight lunges with torso rotation etc.," she says. Warmups help in a multitude of ways, but the most important are: Increases Body Temperature: "A good warm up should increase your body temperature, which improves the elasticity of muscles, and allows improved oxygen delivery to the muscles," Dr. Gardner points out. "This allows the body to perform more intense and strenuous activity." Improves Workout Performance: Michaels points out that one of the key benefits of a warmup is that it will improve your overall performance during your workout. "via the facilitation of greater range of motion, improved oxygen delivery to the muscles for better power and endurance, and enhanced neuromuscular function." It quite literally "allows your muscles to start to contract also improves nerve transition and the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to muscles," adds Dr. Gardner. "This allows the muscles to contract and relax faster." Can Help Improve Flexibility: Dynamic stretching before exercise improves the elasticity and flexibility of your muscles, Dr. Gardner explains. "This has benefits not only for that work-out, but when done consistently, can aid in long-term flexibility improvement." May Prevent Injury: Because of all the reasons above, warmups are an effective tool against preventing injury, Michaels points out. Help You Mentally Prepare for a Workout: In addition to all the physical benefits of a warm up, there is a huge mental component as well. "A warm-up is a good time for you to collect your thoughts as well, and mentally prepare to take on a strenuous workout," Dr. Gardner reveals. "This ensures that your body, and your mind, are ready for the exercise." Warming-up sends important signals to your body that you're about to work hard. Doing a quick warm-up before you dive into your official workout not only prepares your body mentally and physically for the exercise to come, but can also prevent injury and improve flexibility. Even just a few minutes

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