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7 Dynamic Warm-Ups

Dynamic stretches can increase flexibility, help you warm up and protect you from injury before you work out.



By Linda Melone

Hitting a golf ball or jumping into a vigorous game of tennis without adequately warming up or stretching increases the risk of injury. While traditional static stretching (stretch-and-hold) helps flexibility, it isn't a warm-up in itself. The solution is a dynamic warm-up that uses compound movements – essentially moving the body while you stretch.

"Warm-ups that simulate moves you'll be performing during the workout work best," says fitness professional Amy Ashmore, PhD. "The key to using dynamic warm-ups for those with arthritis lies in using a smaller range of motion and staying within your abilities." For example, perform a modified squat (half-way) instead of a full squat.

Try these seven dynamic stretches that can help you warm up before your next workout.

1. Hip Circles. Stand on one leg, using a countertop for support, and gently swing the opposite leg in circles out to the side. Do 20 circles in each direction. Switch legs. Progressively increase the size of the circles as you become more flexible.

2. Arm Circles. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart and hold arms out to the sides, palms down, at shoulder height. Move your arms in circles 20 times in each direction. Progressively increase the size of the circles as you become more flexible.

3. Arm Swings. Stand with arms outstretched forward, parallel to the floor with palms facing down. As you step forward, swing your arms in unison to the right so your left arm is in front of your chest and fingers point to the right. Keep torso and head facing forward; move only at the shoulders. Swing arms in the opposite direction as you step again. Repeat five times on each side.

4. High-Stepping. Stand with your feet parallel and shoulder-width apart. Step forward with the left leg and raise the right knee high toward your chest (use a wall for balance, if needed). Use both hands (or one, if using the other for balance) to pull the knee up farther. Pause and lower right leg, then repeat on the other side. Continue "high-stepping" five times on each leg as you walk forward.

5. Heel-to-Toe Walk. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Take a small step forward, placing your right heel on the ground and rolling forward onto the ball of your foot. Rise as high as possible on your toes, while bringing the left foot forward and stepping in the same heel-to-toe roll. Repeat five times on each leg.

6. Lunges with a Twist. Stand with feet parallel, then take an exaggerated step forward (keep one hand on a wall for balance, if needed) with your right foot, planting it fully on the floor in front of you. Allow the knee and hip to bend slowly while keeping your torso upright. Keep right knee directly over ankle – do not allow it to go beyond your toes. Slightly bend your left knee, lowering it until it is a couple of inches above the floor (or as far as flexibility allows). In this position, reach overhead (skip the overhead reach if your shoulders are compromised) with your left arm and bend torso toward the right. Return your torso to an upright position, and step forward with the left foot, back to starting position. Repeat five times on each side. (**Note:** Do not attempt this if you have trouble with balance.)

7. Step Up and Over. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, hands on hips (or lightly touching a wall in front of you for balance). Shift your weight to your left leg and lift your right leg until your thigh is parallel to the ground, then step out to the right side as if stepping over an object. Pause, then lower into a squat (or half squat). Pushing up through the heels, stand up and return to starting position. Repeat five times on each side.



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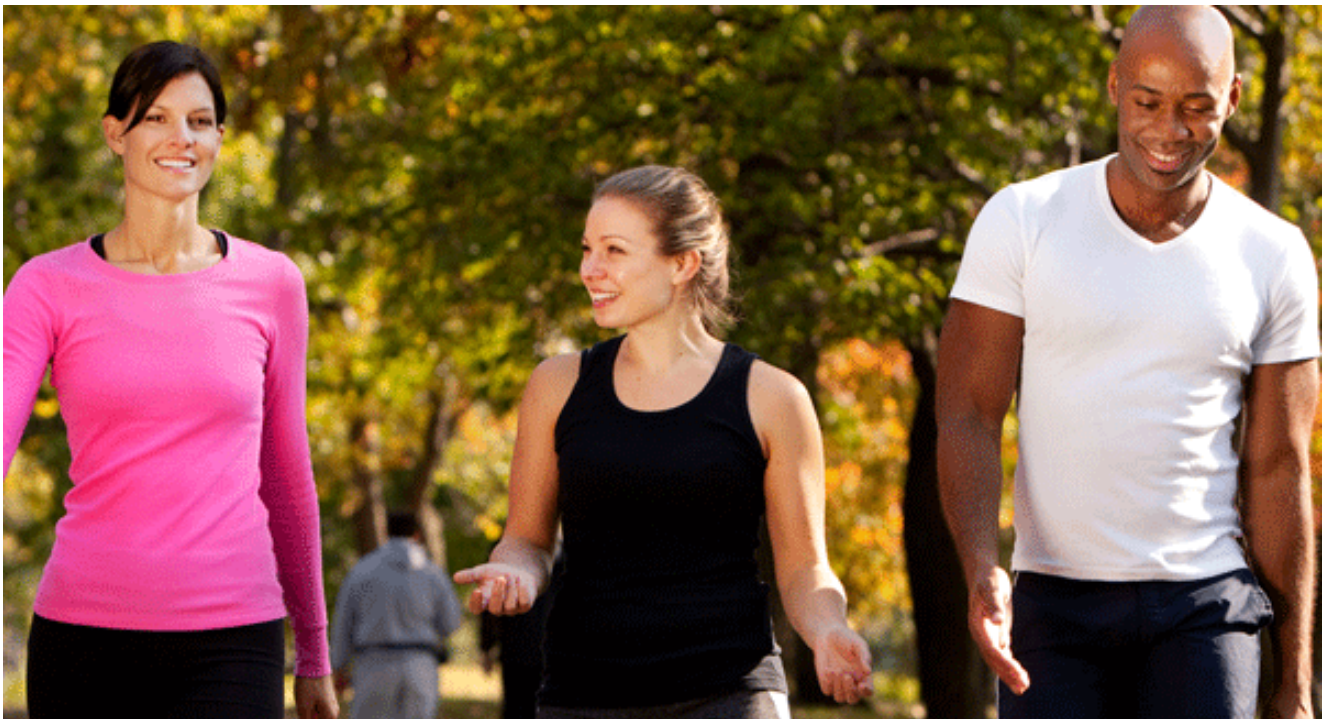
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