



Stretch it out:

A netball players guide to flexibility

Are you giving your muscles the TLC they deserve?

The debate around the efficacy of stretching before sports activities has been reignited by recent medical research. While some studies suggest that pre-sport stretching may not reduce injury incidence and might even increase risk, it's crucial to delve deeper into the nuances of this topic.

A systematic review of 100 medical studies recently highlighted that stretching does indeed increase flexibility. However, the link between increased flexibility and injury prevention is complex. Only a few athletes, such as gymnasts and figure skaters, require extreme flexibility for optimal performance. For most sports, studies indicate that improved warm-ups incorporating light activities with balance and strength exercises are more effective in preventing injuries.

Should We Stretch During the Season?

Absolutely! Stretching remains beneficial when performed correctly and under the right circumstances. It can decrease the likelihood of injuries, especially for individuals with poor flexibility. Stretching also plays a crucial role in post-injury recovery. Young athletes, who often experience muscle imbalances due to growth spurts, should prioritise regular stretching to maintain or enhance flexibility.

The Take-Home Message on Stretching

When warming up before training or playing, focus on dynamic exercises such as jumping, bounding, balancing, and shuffling to mimic game conditions.

For those with restricted range of motion and poor flexibility, frequent but gentle stretching within natural limits is recommended during the season. Avoid overstretching, as it can lead to injury. Consistent, gradual stretching can help improve normal movement ranges and facilitate gradual improvement in flexibility.

Recommended Stretches for Netball

To maintain flexibility and prevent injury, include stretches targeting:

- Quadriceps
- Iliotibial Band (ITB)
- Calf Muscles
- Hip Flexors

Effective Warm-Up Strategies for Netball

A comprehensive warm-up routine is crucial for preparing your body for the demands of a netball game. Here's a suggested warm-up routine:

1. General Warm-Up (5-10 minutes):

- Light Jogging: Start with light jogging to increase your heart rate and blood flow to muscles.
- Dynamic Stretches: Incorporate leg swings, arm circles, and torso twists to prepare your joints for movement.

2. Sport-Specific Drills (10-15 minutes):

- Passing Drills: Practise short and long passes to engage your arms and improve hand-eye coordination.
- Footwork Drills: Perform ladder drills, side shuffles, and quick steps to enhance agility and balance.
- Jumping and Landing: Practise jumping and controlled landings to simulate game movements and strengthen your lower body.

3. Dynamic Stretches (5 minutes):

- Focus on the muscle groups most used in netball, including the calves, hamstrings, quads, and hip flexors.

Stretching and Flexibility Tips for Netball Players

Flexibility is essential for peak performance in netball, enabling players to move efficiently and reduce the risk of injuries. Here are some tips to enhance flexibility:

- **Consistent Routine:** Incorporate stretching into your daily routine, even on rest days. Consistency is key to improving flexibility.
- **Balanced Approach:** Ensure you stretch all major muscle groups to maintain overall balance and symmetry in your body.
- **Listen to Your Body:** Stretching should not be painful. Mild discomfort is normal, but avoid pushing too hard, which can cause injuries.

Special Offer for Double Bay Diamonds Players

Don't forget: All registered Double Bay Diamonds players receive discounted treatment at Benchmark Partners Rose Bay Physiotherapy & Sports Injury Centre. Inform the receptionist of your registration with DBD to avail of this offer.

Stay flexible, stay strong, and play your best!