

EXERCISE STRUCTURE: SETTING IT UP



Exercise module

The Warm Up

Every workout should begin with a warm-up. Muscles that are warmed up and stretched work better and are less likely to be pulled or strained. A warm-up should last five to 10 minutes. By moving your arms and legs in a slow, rhythmic fashion, your body temperature will rise and your heart and blood pressure will increase too.

Some examples of warm-up activities include arm circles, arm swings, and marching in place. Select one of these activities and do it to warm up the next time you exercise. Remember, warm-up activities are good for alleviating stress, too. When you're sitting at your desk and feel tension rising, stand up and march in place or do arm swings or circles. Chances are, after a couple of minutes, you'll experience some relief.

The Cool Down

Cooling down is just as important as warming up. When you exercise, your heart beats faster to keep muscles supplied with blood, and the oxygen and fuel that it carries. If your exercise is stopped suddenly, a sharp decrease in blood pressure can occur because blood begins to pool in your arms and legs. This can lead to feeling dizzy and possibly fainting. A gradual cool-down allows the body to adjust better. To cool down, decrease the intensity of your exercise for five to 10 minutes. Also, do some stretching exercises to build your flexibility and help relieve soreness and loosen tight muscles.

Stretching

Here are the basic steps to follow for proper stretching:

- Slowly stretch into position until you feel a slight tightness in the muscle.
- Hold that position for 10 to 30 seconds until you feel some tension in the muscle, but not until you feel a burning sensation or pain. No bouncing.
- Release the stretch and wait three to five seconds. Then, repeat the stretch again for a total of three to five times, or more if the muscles feel tight.
- If you have a stubborn area of tightness, search for "Resistance Stretching" on Google or YouTube for tips and videos.
- Stretching exercises can also be used as light activities for the days when you don't plan to walk.