

# FLEXIBILITY AND CORE TRAINING

## Exercise module

Stretching is one of the pillars of fitness — great for all ages and fitness stages — yet many people neglect it. Good flexibility increases circulation, protects against injury, improves balance, and relieves stiffness. Even a short routine, done consistently, can produce a more agile you.

### Flexibility Tips

#### Warm Into It

Never stretch cold muscles. Prevent strain by warming up first with five minutes of walking, biking or other light movement. The increased blood flow makes muscles more pliable.

#### Breathe

Deep breathing throughout your routine — in through your nose, out through your mouth. This will help you relax and stretch more effectively.

#### Go Slow

Quick movements cause injury. Hold each stretch in your routine for 30 seconds, to allow the muscle to relax completely.

#### Never Force Yourself into a Position

Never bounce during a stretch. Bouncing may cause small fiber tears, which produce scar tissue. Scar tissue tightens the muscle, making you less flexible and more prone to pain.

#### Listen to your Body

Learn to gauge your flexibility comfort zone. Stretching should challenge your muscles, not hurt them. If you feel sharp pain or your muscle wobbles, back off a little.

#### Balance It

Give equal time to opposing muscle groups. For example, stretch the front of your thigh, then the back of it.

#### Get Your Daily Dose

### Core Training

Core training refers to working out the muscles of your stomach and low back. Besides making you look thinner, exercising these muscles helps prevent low back injuries and reduces low back pain. It also supports the healthy function of all the organs in your abdominal cavity and pelvic area.

During your warm up or cool down, add abdominal crunches to your routine. Lying on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor, support your head with your finger tips and inhale. Then raise your upper back off the floor three to four inches as you exhale quietly, but fully. Your goal is to fire up your stomach muscles, not do a full sit up. Start with 10 reps and build up to 20 repetitions. Between each set, stay in that position but squeeze your butt muscles as you push your hips toward the ceiling. This will work your lower back. Repeat for five to 10 reps. Alternate between working your stomach and lower back for two to four sets each, taking 30 to 60 seconds rest between sets.

### Balance Training

Perform some balance training with every workout you do. For more specifics, ask your provider for more information on “Coordination / Stability Training,” included in the module entitled *Putting It All Together— Think F.I.T.*