

Could your Warm-up be More Effective?

Why is a warm-up important?

Allowing a few minutes to prepare our body for exercise is important and as we age it becomes a crucial component to reduce and prevent injury.

Much like mechanical moving parts, our joints need lubrication. Our tendons and ligaments need to experience light and slow movement to gain elasticity before being put under any stress through rapid movement or the use of weights. Warm-ups also help to slowly increase the demand on the cardiovascular system, so there is no sudden shock.

How to warm-up effectively

If you have access to equipment, treadmill walking or light jogging, or even a light cycle to get the heart rate up a bit. This should be light enough that your breathing doesn't increase a lot but you begin to feel warmer. Listed below is a sample warmup that can be performed at home or in a gym setting before a strength workout. Repeat each action 10 times.



1. *March in place* – focus on actively moving the arms back and forth, then roll the shoulders back slowly increasing the motion by bringing the arms out away from the body with each roll backward. Focus on opening the chest by pulling the shoulders back.
2. *2 Side steps in each direction* – arms should swing up to shoulder height with each sidestep and knees should be slightly bent.
3. *High knees* – lifting the arms overhead at the same time.
4. *Rear leg extension* - Pull your leg back, tapping the toes of each foot behind you, pulling the arms back at the same time, alternating legs.
5. *Chest stretch* - Holding a light exercise band in front of you at chest height, hands about 40 cms apart, stretch the band by pulling the hands apart focusing on squeezing the shoulder blades together.
6. Using the same exercise band still holding it in both hands, stretch the band diagonally across your body, one hand dropping to your hip, the other raising over the opposite shoulder. Repeat this motion 10 times, then repeat on the opposite side.
7. *Squats* - Perform 10 slow small squats.

A good warm-up should take 8 to 10 minutes. All movements should be performed slowly to provide ample opportunity for joint lubrication and muscle warmup before higher demand is placed on the body.

*“In addition to gradually increasing circulation and heart rate, the warm-up should prepare the body for movements required during the workout. Furthermore, all the major joints and muscle groups should be gently engaged... The warm-up should primarily be devoted to continuous rhythmic movements, whereas intensive **static stretching** should be saved for the cooldown”.*¹

¹ ACE Senior Fitness Manual 2014 pg 187