**Short Fit Fact Oct 2022**

Should you be stretching before and after a workout? What type of stretching is best?

According to the American Council on Exercise (ACE), you should be doing dynamic stretching before you begin your workout session. These stretches should be continuous and mimic the movement patterns of the exercise or sport you will engage in. For instance, if you’re going to be running and doing upper body work, you should incorporate or engage the hips, legs, lungs and arms in getting warmed up; include activities such as arm circles both front and back (large and small), a light jog, lunges, open/close the gate etc. It is also important to do at least 5 minutes of stretching and not rush the process; the goal is to improve flexibility and move the muscles through an entire range of motion for the sport or activity you will engage in, just at a lower level.

Upon completion of your workout, you should engage in a proper cool-down and according to ACE you should be doing static stretching. Static stretching is recommended at the end of your workout because it is safer and more effective to stretch muscles which are properly warmed and therefore more pliable. Static stretching also helps to further facilitate your post-workout recovery; keep in mind each stretch should extend the targeted muscle utilized with a little force and should be held for 10-15 seconds. You should not rush the static stretching process either, there should be no pain and there should be no bouncing in the movement.

Studies have shown that doing static stretching before you exercise can weaken performance such as with sprint speed, possibly, because holding the stretch tires out your muscles so remember to complete dynamic stretching before the workout or sport and static stretching afterwards.

Finally, stretching your muscles properly before and after your fitness activity helps keep them loose and lessens the shortening and tightening effect that can lead to the post-workout aches and pains.