

To Stretch or Not to Stretch...that is the question?

When stretching my clients I often hear “gee that’s a bit tight” followed by a pained look on their face. My first question is always “have you been stretching?” to which the answer is most commonly yes, well sort of...ok not really, but I should be shouldn’t I?

If I had a dollar for every time I heard that I would be a millionaire, but I’m not so let’s look at why we are choosing to have sore, tight muscles instead of strong, relaxed and flexible ones.

Time is probably one of the main constraints against us stretching our muscles, especially after a workout. In the past I have been known to skip the stretching and head straight to the showers, instead of taking a small five minutes to relax my muscles after a strenuous workout.

If we were able to add into our exercise regime and extra five minutes for stretching, most of us would start to notice small changes in our bodies. We would be having less aches and pains or DOMS (Delayed Onset of Muscle Soreness) as they are known in the fitness world and we would be an inch or two closer to touching our toes.

When I train my clients, I always like to make sure that they are warmed up, whether it be a 10 min walk on the treadmill or a quick brisk walk around the block before their session, it is important that we get the blood flowing through our muscles. If any of my clients have not warmed up prior to their session, I will set them a three to five minute mini circuit to warm up their muscles, using bodyweight exercises, thus getting the blood pumping through the body and reducing the risk of injury.

When you exercise, whether it be cardio or strength training you’re are tensing and stretching your muscles. Every time you lift a weight you are putting tiny tears into your muscles, which then are repaired with proteins in your body to build muscle. When you have a good workout your muscles and joints would have been tightened up and without a cool down period that includes stretching your muscles can stiffen and become sore within a few hours, which is when the complaining and the strange walking starts taking place.

It is important that you stretch all muscles that you have worked, without bouncing as this can cause injury to the muscle tissue. Hold each exercise for at least 30 seconds before releasing.

So next time you exercise and want to skip your stretches, consider the benefits of stretching and give it a go, your muscle will thank you.