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YOUR WORKOUT IS ONLY AS GOOD AS YOUR WARM-UP

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Fitness routines vary throughout the population. Some lift weights, others run or do Pilates. No matter what workout module you choose there is one thing in common with results and that is the pre-workout warm-up. Often times you will see someone arrive at the gym and instantly jump on the treadmill or elliptical and start exercising. Not only is skipping a warm-up dangerous to your muscles but detrimental to your entire training circuit. The purpose of a warm-up is to prevent injury and improve performance and it should last between 10-15 minutes. In order to maximize the results of your workout, you need to get your blood pumping and your heart rate up.

The main focus of your warm-up is to stretch your muscles and get blood pumping. Although many of us have been told that stretching prior to exercising is dangerous, by using dynamic stretches your body will warm up and be prepared for the work that will follow. Personal trainer and exercise physiologist Franci Cohen says, “dynamic stretching has been growing in popularity, as it engages the muscles in a similar way to the workout itself. Because you are moving through the stretching, your heart begins to pump more blood to working muscles, body temperature rises, the muscles warm up and become more elastic, and the body truly does warm up!” Franci has created a 10-minute warm-up that will “prep even the untrained body for the workout to come.”

- Jog to Butt-Kicks

- Begin by jogging in place for 2-3 minutes at a steady pace.

- Alternate the jog every 20 seconds with Hamstring Curls (a.k.a. Butt-Kicks). Make sure the heel of your foot touches your glutes.

- Toe Walk

- Walk on your toes for 60 seconds to increase ankle motion and strengthen the gastrocnemius.
- Squat with Arm Swing
- Squat down slightly and while rising perform forward arm swing. Repeat for 60 seconds.
- Arm Circles/Windmills
- Extend arms out to the sides like a “T”
- Perform 20 small circles in each direction, then 20 big circles in each direction. This should take about 1-2 minutes.
- Straight Leg Front Kicks
- Focus on kicking with the ball of the foot, and as your hamstrings warm up, begin increasing your range of motion by kicking higher and stronger.
- Make sure to extend the leg as fully as you can without locking during each kick. Perform 25 kicks on each leg (50 total).
- Side Shuffle
- Give yourself about 10 feet of space.
- Shuffle to the right for 3 counts, then touch the floor, repeat to the left. Repeat the right/left shuffle 16 times
- Can also be done on a treadmill but switching shuffle direction every 10 seconds.

“These moves, especially the Front Kicks, will warm up your hamstrings and increase hip flexion, IT band elasticity, and core stability,” says Franci. You will not be over stretched and your performance will increase. You can track your progress by the difference in time it takes you to run a mile. Results are almost guaranteed!

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