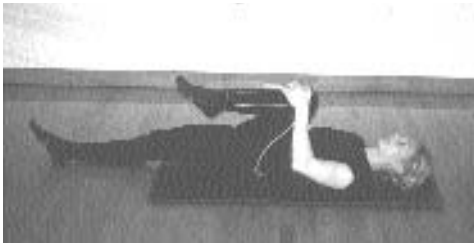


# ~~STRETCHING FOR TRIATHLETES~~

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WITH MODEL NICOLE DEBOOM



There are probably as many philosophies out there about stretching as there are stretches. A good flexibility program is absolutely essential in order to train and race hard without injury, however, so no matter how you choose to go about it you need to make it part of your routine. And stretching will not only help prevent injuries, but also enhance performance. My view is that one should warm up for a few minutes and then do just 4-5 minutes of sport-specific stretches before each activity (longer before a race) and then have a 20-25 minute full-body routine in the evening after the day is over. Set your goal for every day, then if you get in five days per week you'll be in great shape.

Most of these stretches are quite common, but a couple of crucial ones are often forgotten and are marked with asterisks. They are presented here in a logical order both for efficiency and efficacy. They progressive so that each move in group will build upon the last one.

## **Supine hamstring and hip series** (pictured at left):

1) Start by pulling your knee in to your chest, then 2) isolate the biceps femoris (the lateral hamstring) by attempting to raise your foot to the ceiling while your knee is still bent towards your chest. Then 3) release your knee and straighten the leg the rest of the way to get the other hamstrings. 4)\*\* Proceed to the hip stretch by pulling the knee to the opposite shoulder and then 5) over to the side. Keep your shoulders on the floor.

**Traditional straddle** (right): Start with the feet relaxed, lean to the middle and then each side, repeat with feet flexed, then add side stretches in by doing it "ballet-style" as Nicole demonstrates.

**Butterfly stretch** (right): Soles of the feet together, increase the stretch by leaning forwards and/or pulling the feet closer in towards you. Press your





1

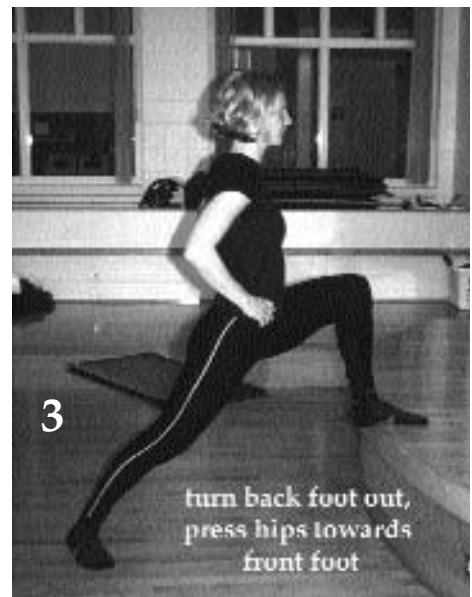


2

knees towards the floor with your elbows.

**Standing Quad stretches:**

(photos 1 & 2 at left) Start with the three vastus quadriceps (which just cross the knee joint) by pulling your foot up to your hip, then work the rectus femoris (the top quad that is also a hip flexor) by doing the same with your knee back behind



3

turn back foot out, press hips towards front foot



you. Try not to lean forward.

**Standing Psoas stretch:\*\*\***

(3) This is one of the most important stretches for cyclists. Put your foot up on something, turn the back foot out, press hips towards front foot. You'll feel this just at a small point in the groin area of your back leg (where the psoas attaches to your femur) if you're doing it correctly.

**Hip flexors (more):**

Position yourself in a one legged split as shown at left, press your hip into the floor. Then grab the back foot with the opposite hand and draw towards the buttocks. This second part is an advanced stretch.

**Hip extensors:**

(4) In the same position as above, the one legged split, drop the front foot slightly inside so that the outside of your thigh on the bent leg is closer to the floor, and then press your opposite shoulder down towards the front knee.

**Back stretches:**

The left bottom photo is a yoga stretch called the cobra. Then stretch your back in the other direction by curling up into a ball.

**Standing back stretch:**

Grasp legs behind knees and



press knee into opposite shoulder

4





lift up through the back using your abdominal muscles (Thanks to Nicole for the addition of this stretch.)

**Calves:**

**Standing calf stretch:** use a stair or other object, drop heel down behind. Be patient with this stretch. The achilles tendon takes at least a minute to respond to a stretch.

**Soleus stretch:**

(top left) Kneeling,



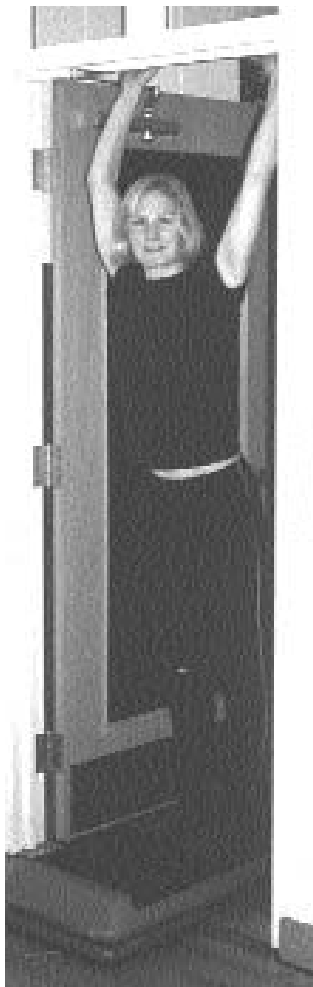
push knee forwards while keeping the foot on the floor as shown.

**Shoulder series:** (bottom row)

It is difficult to effectively stretch some aspects of the shoulder joint, but these few minimum stretches should be done to improve range of motion for swimming, and help prevent rotator cuff tendonitis. The first two of the series get the triceps and 'lats' mostly, the third the posterior deltoids and infraspinatus, the fourth the pectorals and the anterior deltoids.

**Doorway stretches:** \*\*\*

(left and below) To do the first stretch you may need a step if you're shorter, but sometimes you can find something else besides a door jamb to use as the anchor. Keep your elbows relaxed but not bent too much. Press your shoulders forward so



that they come through the doorway and your elbows are behind you. Then get your anterior shoulder elbow by placing your forearm along the vertical part of the door jamb and then turning away from your arm. Your elbow should be at shoulder height.



**Do all stretches at least twice, most three times. Rather than count the number of seconds you hold each position, it is better to just take a few long, slow breaths for each one. Yes, this will end up being around 30 seconds a repetition, but it is better to concentrate on breathing and relaxing into each position than counting seconds. Push slowly, smoothly and gently into each position. The key is to make sure you have a change in the range of motion, so some will take more time than others according to where *your* body is tight.**

