THE TRUTH ABOUT FLEXIBILITY

If you think flexibility is about twisting your body into a pretzel, downward dog or touching your toes then think again. Do you remember when you didn't have to think about bending down to tie your shoelaces or worry about putting your back out reaching for those tools on the top shelf?

We need to be flexible to do simple everyday activities with ease – getting in and out of the car, hitting that epic golf shot, lifting up the kids, sweeping the floor – yet the sad truth is that we all stiffen up with age. You might not notice it, but our over time, our bodies find shortcuts to overcome reduced range of mobility. Staying active and stretching regularly help prevent this loss of mobility, which ensures independence as we age. Being flexible significantly reduces the chance of experiencing back pain and other injuries too.

STRETCHING IS THE KEY TO UNLOCKING FLEXIBILITY.

It can relieve back pain, stiff necks, and sore knees when tight muscles are to blame. As you age, stretching can help keep you active and flexible, making it easier to accomplish everyday tasks involving **walking**, **climbing stairs**, or **reaching**. Equally important, it may also help you prevent life-altering falls, since flexibility and a good **range of motion** can affect your balance.

The good news is that you can do something about it – from today. The only way to improve your flexibility is to stretch. **Stretching** allows you to **tune** in to **your body**. It's a great form of active relaxation too that can **improve both mental and physical wellbeing**.

STRETCHING SHOULD…

1. **Take place for at least 5 – 10 minutes (after your workout)**
2. **Never be painful**
3. **Focus on bringing the muscle to a point of slight tension**
4. **Allow you to breathe normally throughout the stretch (don't hold your breath!)**
5. **Be done 4 to 7 days a week**

PREVENTION EXERCISES FOR DESK WORKERS

Working for a prolonged period (especially if seated) with display screen equipment such as computers can come with risks. Poor posture is the main risk factor and can lead to development of **upper cross** and **lower cross syndrome** - **muscular imbalances** that if left to deteriorate can become a musculoskeletal injury.

UPPER CROSS SYNDROME

Upper cross syndrome (forward head syndrome) is caused by tightness in the chest, upper scapula and trapezius muscles and weakness in the **neck flexor** and lower scapula muscles and this moves the head forward and out of alignment with the spine. This can result in headaches, neck pain and upper back pain.

Upper and lower cross syndrome **can be prevented or corrected** through maintaining good posture, introducing standing intervals (if possible) when working at your desk, and by regularly carrying out the exercises in the video. As you will see some of the exercises are carried out with a resistance band, if you do not have a band, doing the movements without can still be beneficial.

LOWER CROSS SYNDROME

Lower cross syndrome is caused by tightness in the **lower back** and **hip flexor** muscles and weakness in the gluteal and abdominal muscles leading to an anterior pelvic tilt. If you have an anterior pelvic tilt you may suffer from poor mobility, poor flexibility, and lower back pain.

UPPER & LOWER CROSS SYNDROME