

## **ASK THE CHIROPRACTOR**

### **Stretching a must for weekend warrior**

**Question:** I am a weekend warrior with sports. I play softball on the weekends and want to know if stretching really makes a difference?

**Answer:** The answer is a resounding yes, especially for the weekend warrior. You are typical of the average adult athlete. Whether it is two or seven days a week that you work out, stretching is imperative to prepare for activity, prevent injury and cool down muscles after working them.

It only takes approximately 15 minutes to appropriately stretch prior to physical activity. Stretching is essential because it elongates the muscles prior to use. An unprepared muscle that is given a rapid stretch will pull from its origin and insertion around the bone from which it attaches. The end points of muscles are tendons and their responsibility is to attach to bone. When the muscles vigorously pull at these tendons they move the bone to quickly causing a strain at this region. A strain is accompanied by swelling, restriction of movement and pain. Pre-stretching the muscle and tendons prepares the tissue for sudden, quick jolts by elongating the tendons' insertions. Pre-stretching prior to a jolt is less likely to cause a strain because there is more length to the tendon to adapt to the movement. Stretching also prevents injuries to the belly of the muscle. The belly of the muscle contains fluid. A cooler fluid moves slower and adapts slower to movement. Stretching warms out the stagnant cooler fluids in the belly and dissipates toxins such as lactic acid that accumulate secondary to dormancy.

A well-prepared muscle means a well-prepared joint. The joints that are predominantly used for your particular activity should be concentrated on, although full-body stretching is always recommended.

A well-prepared body includes a well-prepared nervous system. Many athletes choose chiropractic care to enhance their performance. The nervous system controls muscle function and if you continue to feel tight or sore in your muscular regions you should consult a chiropractor to determine if assistance is required.

**Quote of the week:** *“Failure is not the worst thing in the world...The very worst is not to try.”* – Anonymous