



Cooling Down After Being Active

Article written by Ann Fenton (ann.fenton@unl.edu), Extension Educator in Pierce County.

While being physically active, your heart is beating faster than usual, your body temperature is higher and your blood vessels are dilated. A cool down period helps your body transition back to normal. Begin to slow down your movements gradually. You can start cooling down by changing to a less vigorous activity, such as moving from jogging to walking. Stopping abruptly may cause dizziness. Cooling down helps reduce muscle soreness and improve relaxation.



Stretch It Out

Take the time to stretch after physical activity to increase muscle and joint flexibility. Here are several stretches from the [Guide to Physical Activity and Your Heart](#) that you can use when cooling down. Do each stretch slowly and steadily, without bouncing.

- **Calf wall push.** Stand facing a wall, about 1 ½ feet away from it. Then lean forward and push your hands against the wall, keeping your heels flat. Count to 10 (or to 20 for a longer stretch). Rest. Repeat.
- **Hamstring palm touch.** Stand with your knees slightly bent. Then, bend from the waist and try to touch your palms to the floor. If you can't reach all the way to the floor, just go as far as you can. Count to 10 or 20, then rest. Repeat. If you have lower back problems, do this stretch with your legs crossed.
- **Overhead triceps stretch.** Bend your right elbow and use your left arm to bring it up behind your head. You should feel a gentle stretch on the outside of your upper right arm. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds. Repeat with the left elbow behind your head. Rest. Repeat.
- **Standing quadriceps stretch.** Place your left hand on a chair or wall for support, bend your right knee, and reach back with your right hand to grab the top of your right foot. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds. Repeat on the left side. Rest. Repeat.

Sources:

1. Warm Up Cool Down, American Heart Association: <https://healthyforgood.heart.org/move-more/articles/warm-up-cool-down>
2. Your Guide to Physical Activity and Your Heart, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/heart/phy_active.pdf
3. Making Physical Activity a Part of a Child's Life, Center for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/adding-pa/activities-children.html>

How do I help my family stay active?

As a parent, you can help shape your child's attitudes and behaviors toward physical activity. Here are a few ideas:

- Set a positive example by leading an active lifestyle yourself.
- Take children to places where they can be active, such as public parks, community baseball fields or basketball courts.
- Give your children equipment that encourages physical activity.
- Instead of watching television after dinner, take family walks or play active games together.

For more information check out Family Fun on the Run:

<http://go.unl.edu/familyrun>