



7 SECOND STRETCH: FACILITATING FLEXIBILITY

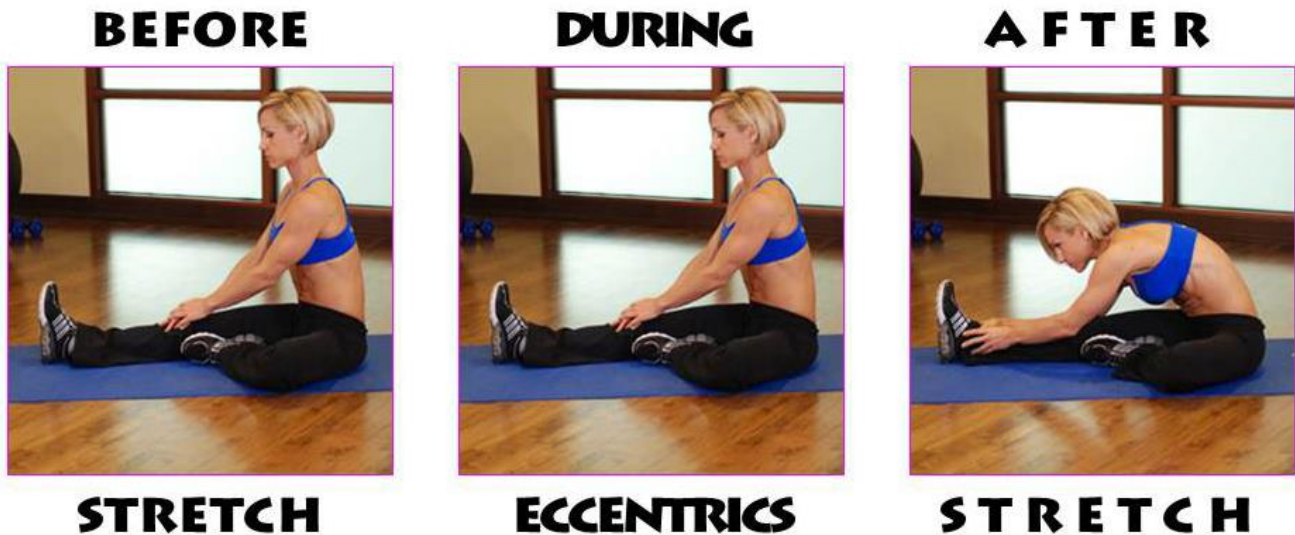
My previous two columns covered the general benefits of flexibility and the specific advantages of Eccentrics in Stretching, aka “proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation.” If you need to catch up, all of my columns are available at the website listed below.

Today, I will give you my quickest explanation of the fastest way to flexibility. While this phenomenal stretching phenomenon can be applied to every muscle, let’s take a look at one of the most problematic... the hamstrings.

If you play along, prepare to be amazed! However, always warm up and work out first; never stretch a cold muscle.

1. For this particular example, sit down (on a bench, bed, or floor) with one leg straight and the knee of the other leg comfortably bent. We will focus on increasing the range of motion of your straight leg’s hamstring muscles on the back of your thigh (semimembranosus, semitendinosus, and biceps femoris).
2. Slowly move into the fully-stretched position by gradually leaning your entire upper body forward (not just your head). It may be easier for you to hold onto your leg and to use your arms to help pull yourself towards your straight leg. As the muscles relax, you should be able to gradually deepen the stretch. Hold the final stretched position for at least 7 seconds.
3. Now, with your hamstring muscles fully-stretched, hold onto your leg with both hands to lock yourself into this position. Then, while remaining completely motionless, slowly and progressively push down with your straight leg and foot (while breathing out), as if you are trying to drive your heel into the floor (or bed or bench). Though attempting to move your foot toward the ground, you actually **DO NOT MOVE** your body whatsoever during the contraction. This statically-stretched contraction process is called “Eccentrics in Stretching,” which you will continue to push and hold for an additional 7 seconds.
4. Onlookers should not be able to tell that you are doing anything other than a static (motionless) stretch. As you exhale, you are relaxed everywhere... except for your hamstring muscles, which are isometrically contracting from a fully-stretched position. You should definitely feel an increase in tension in the back of your thigh.
5. After you have held this contraction for 7 seconds, **GRADUALLY RELAX** those contracted fibers, while maintaining the **EXACT** same position throughout. You shouldn’t move **AT ALL** during this entire stretch-contract-relax process.
6. This contraction of a few muscle fibers in the hamstrings actually increases the elongation of the other muscle fibers in the hamstrings. It moves the fibers away from the center of the muscle and **IMMEDIATELY** increases the flexibility of that muscle. The effects of Eccentrics in Stretching are incredibly instantaneous and how this works within the body is magnificently miraculous.

7. Once you are completely relaxed and no longer contracting, be prepared to be amazed. You should now be able to continue to increase the distance of your original stretch... typically moving your upper body towards your leg much further than initially. You should be able to deepen the stretch to a much greater extent than before the 7-second contraction. Then, hold this new stretched position for 7 seconds before slowly exiting the stretch. It is VERY important to exit all stretches gradually and carefully. You can repeat this entire process another time or two. Then, of course, you need to do likewise with the other leg.



Eccentrics in Stretching causes your muscles to be temporarily, and eventually permanently, stretched “off-center.” All you have to do is statically stretch the muscle for 7 seconds, perform an “eccentrically stretched contraction” for 7 seconds, deepen the stretch for another 7 seconds... and then slowly release out of it. 7-7-7 for each muscle and you’re good to go.

Whether performed between each exercise or at the end of every workout, Eccentrics in Stretching is as time-efficient as it is productive. For more training tricks on Strength, Stamina, Stretching, and Sustenance, you can access all of my Garden Island Newspaper columns via my website below.

I look forward to hearing your questions and answering all of them in columns to come.

In Health & With Hope,

Doug :-)

Doug Jones earned his Master’s Degree in Exercise Physiology from the University of Maryland and has served professionals and personalities as a concierge fitness trainer for decades. As a resident of Kaua`i and Connecticut, he has helped millions of people learn the secrets of fitness and fat loss, both online and in person. To submit your questions, or for more information, call (808) 652-6453 or visit www.DougJonesFitness.com