

This information is forwarded by the **Love Thy Neighbor Ministry** at Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church, Milton FL.

Source of Information: The Catholic Foundation of Northwest Florida. Due to the many references, some may not be current but have many useful reference sources. Emails are sent using the Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) method.

This quality of life series focuses primarily on senior citizens plus other supplemental information. You do not have to be a Senior to make use of this information. If you know of a Senior, a parishioner or a neighbor who could use this information you are invited to give them a copy of this email. Fellowship through improved communications is guided by the second greatest commandment. Sometimes an act of kindness can be as simple as a phone call, a visit, or receipt of an email.

Suggestion: Create a separate folder for this information for ease of reference.

For information about our Parish, click on the following link: <http://parishesonline.com/scripts/HostedSites/Org.asp?ID=14423>

Our parish spirit is rising, is rising.

Stretching: Helps You Keep Flexible, Active and Injury Free

http://www.legacygifts.org/savvy_senior.jsp?WebID=GL2004-0129&D=200838

Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior,

Can you provide some stretching tips for an inflexible old woman? I've gotten so stiff in recent years I can't even bend over to tie my shoes anymore. What can you tell me?

Hate to Stretch

Dear Stretch,

Of all possible exercises, stretching tends to be the most overlooked and neglected among seniors, yet nothing is more vital to keeping an aging body limber and injury free. Here's what you should know.

Good Stretch

As we grow older, common day-to-day activities like reaching down to tie your shoes or looking over your shoulder to back your car out of the driveway can become difficult. In fact, according to the American College of Sports Medicine, we lose as much as 10 percent of our flexibility every 10 years. But the good news is, by incorporating some simple stretching exercises into your routine (at least three times a week) you can greatly improve your flexibility, range of motion and balance as well as enhance your posture and circulation, relieve pain and stress and prevent injuries. In addition, stretching is also important as a warm-up and cool-down for more vigorous activities and leg stretching is an excellent way to prevent nighttime leg cramps.

Stretching Basics

Stretching exercises should focus on the muscles in your calves, front and back thighs, hips, lower and upper back, chest, shoulders and neck. If you don't have any experience with stretching, there's a wide variety of videos (see www.collagevideo.com) and books (like "Stretching for Dummies," www.dummies.com) you can purchase that provide instructions and demonstrate proper techniques. Also see www.mayoclinic.com/health/stretching/SM00043 for a slide show of how to stretch the major muscle groups.

While stretching, it's very important to listen to your body. You want to stretch each muscle group to the point where the muscle feels tight. If it hurts, you've gone too far. Back off to the point where you don't feel any pain, then hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds. Relax, then repeat it three to five times, trying to stretch a little farther, but don't bounce. Bouncing greatly increases your chance of injury.

It's also a good idea to warm up a little before you start stretching by walking in place and pumping your arms. And remember to breathe when you stretch. Keep in mind that muscles that have not been stretched in a long time take time to regain their flexibility. So be patient, persistent and go slow.

Tips and Tools

To help you limber up here are a few tips, tools and alternative options that may interest you:

Stretching tool -

If you need some help executing your stretches, the Stretch-Out Strap (it has built-in loops you place your hands and feet into) is a handy tool. You can buy one in most sporting good stores for about \$15.

Bed stretching -

Have you ever tried stretching in bed before you get up in the morning? It's a great way to start the day and reduce that morning stiffness. And a helpful tool is "The Stretching in Bed" instructional guide (\$3.95; www.senior-fitness.com; 800-306-3137) which offers 14 stretching exercises, with illustrations.

Chair Yoga -

A popular way to improve your flexibility is through yoga. Chair yoga is a gentle, safe way to start. In chair yoga, you replace the yoga mat with a chair where most poses can be duplicated and are much easier on those less limber muscles.

Tai Chi -

The ancient art of tai chi is yet another option to consider. To learn it, it's best to work with an instructor who can teach you the correct postures, movements and breathing techniques. To locate a class in your community, contact your local senior center, YMCA or YWCA, health club or wellness center.