

AFX STRETCHING PROGRAM

Stretching is the deliberate lengthening of muscles in order to increase muscle flexibility and joint range of motion. Stretching exercises are an important part of any exercise or rehabilitation program because they can help to: 1) reduce the risk of injury, 2) speed recovery from injury, and 3) optimize performance. The AFX has been designed to enable full range of motion stretching of all the muscles in the feet and lower legs in a comfortable seated position.

PRECAUTIONS

- If you have experienced an injury to your foot or lower leg, consult with a qualified healthcare practitioner before beginning any exercise program;
- Avoid vigorous stretching of tissues in the following conditions:
 - » After a recent fracture
 - » After prolonged immobilization
 - » With acute inflammation or infection in or around the joint
 - » With a bony block that limits motion
 - » With muscle contractures or when joint adhesions limit motion
 - » With acute pain during stretching
- Move into each stretch position slowly and gradually; avoid jerky or rapid movements;
- Stretch through a pain-free range of motion.
- Avoid bouncing as you stretch;
- Avoid holding your breath; breathe rhythmically and slowly;
- Do not be overly aggressive in stretching. Increased flexibility may not be noticed for 4 to 6 weeks.

GUIDELINES

1. Please refer to the AFX Instruction Poster for more information regarding device set-up and directions for use.
2. Stretching is facilitated by warm body tissues; therefore, a brief warm-up period is recommended (e.g. approximately 5 to 10 minutes of walking or light jogging).
3. For each stretch, position yourself so that a comfortable sensation of tension is felt in the muscle. Try to relax the muscles in your feet and lower legs as much as possible.
4. Hold the stretch for a minimum of 15 seconds until a sense of relaxation occurs.
5. Be aware of the feeling of relaxation, or “letting go.”
6. If you are following a strength training program, stretch immediately before each strengthening exercise and after each set.
7. In addition to training with the AFX, it is also recommended that the hamstring muscles (muscles on the back of the thighs) be stretched regularly, as tight hamstrings are very common and can result in increased stress on the low back and Achilles tendon.

TRAINING PROGRAM - 3 sessions per week

Flexibility and Performance* Enhancement

- » Follow Guidelines 2 to 6 above
- » Perform exercises shown
- » Alternate the foot that you start with each session

Week 1

- » Perform 1 set of 15 to 30 seconds duration for each exercise

Week 2

- » Perform 2 sets of 15 to 30 seconds duration for each exercise

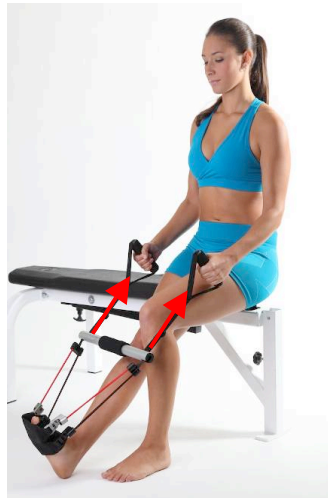
Week 3 onward

- » Perform 3 sets of 15 to 30 seconds duration for each exercise

** For best results in performance, a strength training program should be performed in combination with the stretching program above (see Guideline 6).*

STRETCHING EXERCISES

Plantar Flexors / Toe Flexors



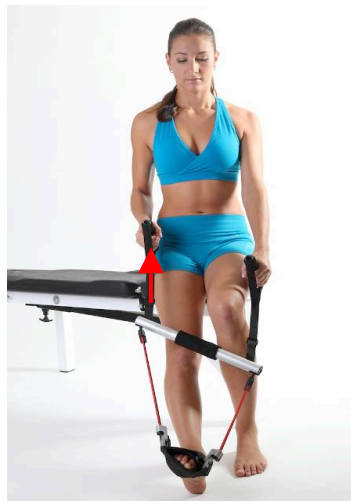
Pull on handles as shown

Evertors



Pull on handle as shown
(ensure toes are flexed)

Invertors



Pull on handle as shown
(ensure toes are flexed)

Dorsiflexors / Toe Extensors



Pull on knee as shown

ADVANCED STRETCHING

If an area is particularly resistant to stretching, Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF) may be used. **PRECAUTION:** Do not attempt PNF stretching until a strength conditioning program has been completed for the muscles of the foot and lower leg. PNF stretching is used to make rapid gains in flexibility, and has been shown to result in the greatest improvement in joint range of motion compared to other stretching techniques. Ensure that a thorough warm-up is completed before attempting PNF stretching. PNF stretching involves the following steps:

- Stretch the muscle as much as comfortably possible by moving the joint to the end of the range of motion and hold the stretch for a minimum of 15 seconds until a sense of relaxation occurs;
- Hold the joint in that position and vigorously contract the muscle being stretched for 5 to 6 seconds (Note: if pain is experienced, stop the stretch immediately);
- Relax the muscle and attempt to move the joint through a greater range of motion. Hold the new joint position for approximately 30 seconds;
- Repeat steps b and c two to four times.

For example, to use PNF stretching to enhance the flexibility of the calf muscle and Achilles tendon:

- Stretch for 15 seconds:



- Contract calf muscle (circled in photo) without moving your foot for 6 seconds:



- Relax the calf muscle and attempt to move your foot closer to your shin by pulling on the handles. Hold the new joint position for approximately 30 seconds.
- Repeat steps b and c two to four times.