

Stretch for Life

Part 1

by

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Flexibility is a key component of a happy and healthy life. Fluidity of body and mind keeps us not only young in spirit but more energetic and agile as we age. I laughingly associate lack of flexibility with rigormortis...the ultimate rigidity! “Stay flexible”, I say – “stretch, stretch, stretch for your life!”

Remember, we were all born as “flexible” little babies. We were little “contortionists” as small children, but most of us gradually stopped the daily twisting and turning and stretching of our bodies as we “grew up” and had “more important” things to do than take care of our health. The **bad news** is that as we age...we lose our flexibility. We move our bodies less; we become more “set in our ways”; we become more rigid. In most cases, muscle and joint aches and pains are symptoms of lack of daily stretching and poor conditioning. Even patients with arthritis pain report significant reduction of symptoms once they follow the prescribed stretching program. The **good news** is that even though we may not be able to regain our youth, we **can** certainly regain our flexibility! Even better news is that everyone can stretch...even if you are confined to bed.

Actually, one of my favorite places to stretch and one that I highly recommend is in bed before getting up. There are several reasons for this recommendation: the first being that most of us get up and “hit the ground running”. (Sound familiar?) Needless to say, it becomes virtually impossible to find time during the day to make oneself slow down long enough to do gradual, slow stretches with deep breathes and concentrated releases. So, starting your day by staying in bed a few extra minutes while stretching not only sounds appealing but will also give you a feeling of accomplishment at the beginning of your day. What a great way to start your day...already feeling good about yourself! The second reason is that you can gently stretch several areas at the same time, because your body is in a resting position. This also plays into the third reason of getting a better stretch if you aren’t activating other muscles in order to “keep your balance”. The fourth reason is that it’s safe and easy, even for seniors. The fifth reason is that it will give you time to wake gradually with deep breathing and reflect on everything you are grateful for and release any pent up, stressful feelings. A “good morning stretch” will release your aches and pains, increase your daily energy level and improve your circulation and mental attitude.

Free “Stretch for Life” demonstrations are given during the week at A Wellness Center & Spa. Call to register 770-966-8000.