

It's cold outside so warm up

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Warming up before you undertake any physical activity is a simple measure to prepare your body for exercise, and to help prevent injury. It is particularly important to warm up if you are working in colder temperatures.

Colder weather cools down your body temperature and therefore your muscles. Performing activities where you are using your muscles either through force or by stretching them when you are cold can lead to muscles tears and joint injuries.

Think of an activity you perform at work where you have to stretch out, or have to use your strength to lift an object. Are you warmed up to perform this task?

How does a warm up prepare you for activity?

A warm up increases both your heart rate and respiratory rate, preparing you for an increase in activity. It increases blood flow to the muscles, increasing the temperature of the working muscles allowing them to stretch more easily. Your limbs and body will be able to move through a greater range of movement, and your muscles will be more pliable and resistant to injury.

How to warm up

Start with an exercise to gently raise your heart rate and breathing such as walking on the spot; this should help to increase the temperature of your muscles so you are ready to stretch. A warm up should take only 5 to 10 minutes. Remember to target the muscles that you will be using.

Try this simple warm up routine

- **walk on the spot:** 10x each leg, then 5x on each leg with high knees.
- **squats:** feet shoulder-width apart, squat down as if you are going to sit on a chair, maintaining a stable pelvis, then stand up. Try 10x squats.
- **wide squats:** stand with your feet a bit wider apart 5x.
- **calf raises:** as you stand up, rise up and down on your toes 10x.
- **touching toes:** slide your hands down the front of your thighs as far as you can go, gently bending through your back and hips. Slide back up your thighs and then reach up to the sky and feel a big stretch. Do this 3x.
- **arm circles:** reach up to the sky again and take a deep breath in, then draw a big circle with both arms ending by your sides as you breathe out 3x.
- **body twists:** place your hands on your hips with your feet shoulder-width apart. Rotate your torso to the right and left 5x.
- **body bends:** reach up to the sky with both arms as you breathe in, hands clasped. As you breathe out lean your body and arms over to one side. Breathe in to come back into the middle, and then breathe out as you bend to the other side 5x.

Now for some all-important stretches

When you are performing stretches, hold each stretch for **15 to 30 seconds**, **breathing slowly and steadily**. You should not experience any discomfort with the stretch; ease back if you do, and remember not to bounce when holding the stretch.



calf stretch: standing with one foot forward, one back, with toes facing forwards. Lunge forward by bending the front knee, and feel a calf stretch in the back leg keeping the back heel on the ground. Repeat on the other leg.



quadriceps stretch: holding on to a bench or rail for balance, bend the leg to be stretched up behind and hold at the ankle with your hand. You will feel a stretch down the front of your thigh. Stand tall and tuck your bottom in. Repeat on the other leg.



hamstrings: stand, resting your leg on a step or low chair. Bend forward at your hips until you feel a stretch down the back of the thigh (of the leg on the step or stool). Repeat on the other leg.



adductors: stand with the leg to be stretched to the side, toes facing forward and the knee straight. Keep your trunk upright as you lunge to the opposite side until you feel the stretch along the inside of the leg.

So the clear message is to get in to a routine with these straightforward warm ups and stretches – you'll be better prepared for a safe and injury-free winter.