

Exercise Therapy

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Self-Stretching

Definition

According to Kisner, Colby, and Borstad (2018), Any stretching exercise that is carried out independently by a patient after instruction and supervision by a therapist is referred to as self-stretching.

Self-stretching is a therapeutic exercise technique in which an individual independently applies a stretching force to their own muscles and surrounding soft tissues to improve or maintain flexibility and range of motion.

Sometimes also called as active stretching, flexibility exercises

Indications

- Restricted range of motion due to shortened muscles or surrounding soft tissues.
- Soft-tissue adhesions and scar tissue that restrict movement, after appropriate assessment.
- Reversible muscle contractures that limit functional activities.
- Muscle tightness associated with prolonged immobilization or reduced movement.
- Shortening of opposing soft tissues that contributes to restricted joint movement.
- Prevention or management of potentially avoidable deformities caused by restricted soft-tissue mobility.
- Reduced flexibility affecting occupational, recreational, or sporting activities.
- Maintenance of flexibility and range of motion following physiotherapy treatment.
- Selected rehabilitation programmes in which stretching supports functional recovery.

Contraindications

- Bony block: Joint movement is restricted by bone, and stretching cannot safely correct the obstruction.
- Unhealed fracture: Bone healing is incomplete and stretching may disrupt the healing process.
- Acute inflammation or infection: The affected region has marked heat, swelling, or other signs of an acute inflammatory or infectious process.
- Acute injury or tissue trauma: Stretching may aggravate a recent muscle tear, ligament injury, or other tissue damage.
- Sharp or severe pain: Joint movement or muscle elongation produces sharp, acute pain.
- Haematoma: Bleeding within soft tissues or significant bruising indicates tissue trauma requiring assessment.
- Joint hypermobility: Excessive joint mobility is already present and additional stretching may increase instability.
- Healing tissues at risk: Stretching may disrupt a surgical repair or the healing of injured tissues.
- Functional dependence on shortened tissues: Some shortened muscles provide essential stability or help a person perform necessary functional activities, particularly when muscle weakness or paralysis is present. Stretching these tissues may reduce functional ability.

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