

Some Basic Stretching Guidelines:

1. Specific stretch should take the muscle to tension but not pain. If there is significant pain, especially if it is sharp, it is a sign that you are either stretching too far, that you are performing the stretch wrong, or that it is the wrong stretch for you.
2. Proper duration of stretching is 30 seconds. Less than that and you really do not get any long term effects and longer than that yields no greater results.
3. Repetitions: try to perform each stretch twice for the full 30 seconds. Do not do the same muscle back to back but rather stretch all the muscles one time and then come back to it. If you have a tendency to have pain at night then make sure you stretch right before bed.
4. Always stretch both sides. Even if one side is tighter than the other it is always important to stretch muscle on both sides in order to maintain symmetry. Otherwise you could end up walking in circles (wink, wink).
5. Stretching is important to do before strengthening for a few reasons. Warming up a muscle before using it helps to prevent injury. Also you want to stretch before you strengthen because then you are working out a muscle that is already long. Strengthening before you stretch makes it more difficult because the muscle is often engorged with blood or “pumped up” which makes it harder to stretch.
6. Consistency is the most important part of stretching and maintaining flexibility. Try to stretch every day, twice a day if possible and if your doctor or therapist says it’s okay.

