



Suffolk Podiatry

Calf Muscle Stretches

Why has calf stretching been recommended?

Tightness in the calf muscles can contribute to different conditions such as heel pain because the calf muscles (the soleus and gastrocnemius) are connected to the heel bone by the Achilles tendon. Tight calf muscles can also contribute to Achilles tendon pain and sometimes forefoot pain. Calf muscle stretches are an easy way to help relieve tension in these structures.

General advice for stretching:

You can stretch any time of day but the best time is after you have “warmed up”, so don’t stretch straight after a long period of inactivity. It is fine to watch TV or listen to music while you are stretching as long as you ensure your posture remains correct throughout.

- You need to stretch daily for a few weeks before you will feel the benefit
- Take up the stretch position slowly and hold this position – do not bounce or jerk
- Try to relax your shoulders, breathing slowly and regularly
- Ideally hold your stretch for 30 – 40 seconds
- Stretch at least once a day
 - Set a reminder or alarm on your phone to prompt you to start your stretching at the same time every day
- Stretch both legs/feet

Stretching the Gastrocnemius muscle

Step 1) Stand so that your fingertips reach the wall with your arms outstretched, with your feet pointed straight forwards ahead, and your heels on the ground.



Step 2) Step forward with one leg, placing your palms flat on the wall.



(continued on the next page)



Step 3) Bend the front knee and the elbows, so that your hips move towards the wall.

Keep the back knee straight and the heel firmly on the ground, making sure that the toes are still pointing forward.

Try to keep your head up and your back in a relaxed neutral position.

Hold this stretch for 30 – 40 seconds and then repeat the process for the other leg.

You will usually feel this stretch pulling in the back of the knee, and the back of the heel.



Stretching the Soleus muscle

First follow steps 1) and 2) of the gastrocnemius muscle stretch.

Step 3) Instead of bending your shoulders so that you are leaning against the wall, bend both of your knees, sinking your weight down.

Try to keep your knees in line with your toes and keep your heels flat on the ground.

You should feel this stretch in the calf muscle and the back of your ankle and heel.



IMPORTANT:

Although stretching can be uncomfortable, it should never be painful. If you feel any pain, especially sharp pain, it may indicate that you are pushing too hard. Try to ease into the stretch rather than forcing it.

If you find that stretching is still too painful, please discontinue and seek advice from your podiatrist or a physiotherapist.

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