



Suffolk Podiatry

Calf Muscle Stretches

Why has calf stretching been recommended?

Tight calf muscles can contribute to conditions such as heel pain, Achilles tendon pain, and sometimes forefoot pain. The calf muscles are connected to the heel bone by the Achilles tendon, so tightness can place increased strain on the foot and ankle. 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. Avoid stretching when your muscles are completely cold, such as immediately after sitting for a long period. 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 will need to stretch daily for several weeks before noticing improvement.
- Take up the stretch position slowly and hold it – do not bounce or jerk.
- Try to relax your shoulders, breathing slowly and regularly.
- Ideally hold each stretch for 30–40 seconds.
- Stretch at least once a day. It may be helpful to set a reminder or alarm on your phone to prompt you to stretch at the same time every day.
- If able, repeat the stretches on both sides.

Stretching the Gastrocnemius muscle

Step 1) - Stand so that your fingertips reach the wall with your arms outstretched. Keep both feet pointing straight forwards and your heels on the ground.



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



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

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

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

Hold this stretch for **30–40 seconds** and repeat **2–3 times on each leg**.

You will usually feel this stretch in the calf, behind the knee, or at the back of the heel.



Stretching the Soleus muscle

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

Step 3) - Instead of leaning forwards towards the wall, bend both knees and lower your body slightly.

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

You will usually feel this stretch in the calf, behind the knee, or at the back of the heel.

Hold this stretch for **30–40 seconds** and repeat **2–3 times on each leg**.



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 a physiotherapist.