Warm-up Guidelines

A warm-up is very important for achieving your fitness goals, and every workout should incorporate one. There are three main functions of a good warm-up:

1. Raises the temperature of the body and increases blood flow through muscles to help prevent injury and allow muscles to work optimally
2. Primes the muscles, joints, ligaments, and tendons for the forces and ranges of motion encountered in the workout
3. Stimulates the nervous system, preparing the body for competition-specific activities

General Warm-up

A general warm-up should be done before any weight training or cardio workout and should take no more than 15 minutes. Some examples include jumping jacks, lateral jumps, lunges, jogging, and brisk walking.

- Try warming up with a sweatshirt on to help raise your body temperature.
  (Remember, you should break into a light sweat while warming up.)
- Do your general warm-up without sneakers to help strengthen the muscles of the foot and ankle.
- Always consider this part of your workout, and you will never forget to do it!

Specific Warm-up

The specific warm-up will vary depending on the particular exercise you are doing. Warming up with lower weights helps groove the correct movement patterns into muscle memory, and it helps prepare the central nervous system and muscles for a maximal effort lift.

- **Lower body specific moves**: quadruped hip circles, body squats, light sets of lower body lifts like deadlifts and squats, short sprints
- **Upper body specific moves**: pushups, arm circles, “No Moneys,” band pull aparts, light bench pressing or military pressing

Tips: Focus on proper technique while executing the lift with as much force as you can. Don’t forget a specific warm-up also pertains to running and sports. A warm-up is a good way to judge how your body will handle a specific workout on any given day; if the warm-up is poor, then tone down the intensity during the workout to prevent injury.
**Stretching & Mobility**

An often overlooked aspect of a fitness regimen is stretching and mobility work. **Stretching** refers to applying tension to a muscle by holding it in a fully lengthened position (think of the effect on your hamstrings when reaching for your toes). **Mobility** refers to anything that improves the ability of a joint to move through its entire healthy range of motion. More attention to stretching and mobility will help prevent injury on our muscles and joints, and also allow us to perform better in the gym or on the field.

**Static Stretching**

- A good stretching routine can be done post-workout and should include some static stretches for large muscle groups (hamstrings, glutes, pectorals, lats, groin, quads).
- The point is to gradually stretch the muscle—there is no need to be in a position that causes pain. Keep the muscle under tension but not beyond its limit.
- Hold the position at that end range of motion, and do not bounce.
- Aim to hold these positions for 30 seconds-1 minute.
- Stretching should be done after a general warm-up, as pulling on a “cold” muscle can actually increase the risk for injury.

**Mobility**

- Mobility helps achieve a more efficient use of our joints by using the full range of motion in which they are capable.
- Mobility work is generally best suited for the ankles, hips, thoracic spine, and shoulders.
- Explore the current range of motion in these joints and gradually work on improving that range by stretching the tissues and muscles that affect that joint. For example, increasing the thoracic spine mobility will help you keep your chest up in a squat for a more efficient and safer lift.
- For example, increasing the thoracic spine mobility will help you keep your chest up in a squat for a more efficient and safer lift.
- A great way to improve thoracic spine mobility is via foam rolling.
Step Up to an Active Lifestyle

Think being physically active is too hard? Too time-consuming? Too boring? Think again! By taking it 10 minutes at a time, you can make huge strides toward improving your health, energy, and well-being.

Being physically active can lower your risk of

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Colon and breast cancer

PLUS it helps to

- Prevent weight gain
- Aid in weight loss, when combined with diet
- Reduce depression
- Enhance cognitive function

So how much does it take? Any activity at all is better than nothing! Ideally, work towards 30 minutes of moderate activity (5 out of 10 intensity) 5 days a week or 25 minutes of vigorous activity (7 out of 10 intensity) 3 days a week or a combination of the two.

Five Tips for Stepping Up to an Active Lifestyle

Break it up. Don’t have a solid half-hour to devote to exercise? You can get the same health benefits by splitting your 30 minutes of activity into three 10-minute blocks and spreading them out throughout the day. Squeeze these 10 minutes in whenever it works best for you: walk in the morning to start your day, around campus at lunchtime, during halftime at a sporting event, or after dinner.

Gear up. Make sure you have a comfortable pair of walking shoes that gives appropriate support.

Drink up. Sip on water before, during, and after exercise to stay hydrated, especially during warm months.

Buddy up. Having a workout partner increases accountability and makes it easier to reach your goals. Can’t find anyone with a similar goal? Just telling your intentions to a supportive friend can make them easier to stick to.

Switch it up. If you find yourself getting bored with your routine, try something different—use a bike instead of walking, go with a friend, or take your regular route backwards. Be creative, and remember that being active is something you’re doing for yourself!
Hitting a Strength Plateau

A plateau is a leveling off of your strength progress that occurs around 4-6 months into a routine. It is important not to give up on a routine too quickly because success might not immediately be seen.

Steps to overcome a plateau:

✓ Change the intensity of your workout.
  - Increase the difficulty of the workout.
  - Switch to a high-intensity workout focused on low repetitions and higher weights. For example, choose a weight that feels heavy enough to be lifted for only 5 reps at a time with proper form, and do a workout involving 3-5 sets of 5 reps with this weight.

✓ Vary the workout routine.
  - Try various programs with different equipment. Major, multi-joint lifts, such as squats, dead lifts, bench presses, or any “clean and jerk” variation, can be done early in your workout.
  - Try using free weights or barbell training instead of machines.
  - Take an exercise you would normally do first and do it last.

✓ Properly warm up for your workout.
  - Spend a few minutes jogging or cycling at low intensity, then move to dynamic stretches and movements, such as lunges, knee hugs, or skips.
  - Mobility stretches or soft tissue loosening exercises using a foam roller may also be helpful.
  - A good warm-up should increase your heart rate and cause you to sweat.

✓ Properly recover from a workout.
  - Try to schedule workouts every other day; it is acceptable to add very low-intensity active recovery on off days.
  - Address your diet—working out properly needs to be fueled with a proper diet.
  - Add a recovery snack with a 3:1 carbohydrate to protein ratio within 30 minutes post workout, such as 8 oz. chocolate milk or a PBJ sandwich.
  - Drink more water during the day.
  - Sleep at least 6-8 hours per night to allow the body to recover from the stress of working out and other daily activities.
  - Create a habit of performing static stretches for the sorest muscles in your body every night—it doesn’t need to be longer than 15 minutes, but it will increase flexibility and blood flow for a better recovery.
10 Steps to a Healthier Weight

Reaching a healthy weight requires lifestyle changes. A healthy weight cannot be reached with a quick fix, such as trendy diets or with expensive pills. The best method for achieving a healthy weight is to create a plan that will last a lifetime. Follow these 10 steps to help you meet your weight goals:

1. Make health your number one priority.
   - Emphasizing health can raise your overall self-esteem resulting in healthy eating, weight loss, and improved health.

2. Create a plan and write it down.
   - Use MyPlate.gov to find out how much food from each food group you should eat.
   - Try keeping a food log to look back and see what you ate.

3. Set realistic goals.
   - If you set unrealistic goals, it is easy to become discouraged.
   - Take it step by step and give yourself time.

4. Eat at least 3 meals a day.
   - Skipping meals will leave you hungrier later in the day.
   - Plan your meals ahead of time and eat a variety of foods.

5. Snack on healthy foods between meals.
   - Choose nutritious snacks such as fruits, vegetables, and low-fat yogurt.

6. Make smart food choices.
   - Your body needs foods from every food group.
   - Make sure to include a variety of foods in your food plan.

7. Practice portion control.
   - Learn the correct portion sizes and eat the proper portions for meals and snack.
   - Use smaller plates to help gauge proper portions.

8. Listen to your body.
   - Know when you are full and stop eating before you are stuffed.

9. Eat slowly.
   - It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to get the message that you are satiated.
   - If you eat fast, you will consume more because your body does not know it is full.

10. Be active.
    - Routine physical activity is important for your overall health.
    - Exercise will not only help you maintain a healthy weight, but it will decrease your risk for chronic illness.

Office of Health Promotion
Health Services Building, 1st floor
610.519.7407
www.villanova.edu/healthpromotion