

IT'S A STRETCH

The exercise that feels more like a massage than a workout.

BY SARAH MILLER

Stretching used to mean a speedy pre-jog toe touch. Now it's its very own special thing—with classes and equipment. "There's a shift where people are realizing that strength and flexibility are two sides of the same coin," says Carrie Collins of Stretch Chi, a resistance stretching studio in Chicago.

Stretching may sound tame, but the benefits are significant. "It keeps joints lubricated; relieves muscle tension and cramping; and improves posture, mobility, and the ability to relax," says Sabrina Fairchild, a kinesiology lecturer at Chico State University in California. As you age, regular stretching helps keep your joints moving through their full range of motion.

Collins points out that the old "hold the stretch" isn't necessarily the best route to results. "It's really important to stretch and strengthen at the same time, so you want to keep the muscle engaged while you stretch." Whether your goal is running a 10K or simply putting on your own sweater for the next 40 years, follow this stretching routine two or three days a week.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY CUNANAN

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