

Stretching Techniques for Cyclists

By Dr. Andy Rosser, Downtown Olympia

Please take a look at the VIDEO I made to accompany this article! <http://rosserchiro.com/stretching-videos>

Stretching doesn't come naturally to me. Some people love it and spend a lot of time doing it, but I've always found it's one of the things that I let slide first when my time gets crunched. The truth is, though, I probably suffer a bit more than I should because of it. Maybe you do too? For me, 2011 is becoming the year of "Keeping it Simple, Making it Consistent" for me. If this resonates with you, this may be a helpful article for you. Even if you already have a comprehensive stretching routine, you may learn a new thing or two from the techniques I'll go over here.

This mini routine has a section for foam rolling and Active Isolated Stretching (AIS). Both of these are different from the typical "stretch and hold" techniques that most of us learned as kids. In my experience, the foam roller and AIS are effective and also keep the brain engaged while I'm doing them. (Less boring=more likely to be done.)

The foam roller I like to use is 3 feet long, 6 inches in diameter, and made of firm foam. It's hardly gives at all when I squeeze it, meaning it will give me a deeper stretch when I use it. It will also break down slower than the lighter density ones. If you buy one or find one to use at the gym, pick the hardest one you can find.

To foam roll each of the following muscles, I do 8-10 steady passes over each muscle. If there are lots of knots and painful spots, I go ahead and do a focused roll over those smaller areas for a few passes as well. I make sure that in the end, though, I cover the whole muscle. I start with my upper back and lats, move to the hips, hamstrings, IT band, and then calves. I use that order with the idea of starting near the torso and working my way out.

Following that, I stretch some of the same muscles and a few more using a technique called Active Isolated Stretching (AIS.) In this technique, the idea is to contract the muscle on the opposite side of the joint to allow a deeper/less stressful stretch that works with the body's neurology. The main difference between AIS and the typical stretch & hold is that multiple (8-10) repetitions of 2 second holds are used. The muscles that I focus on in my routine are the gluteal muscles, hamstring, quadriceps, adductors/abductors, and the calf. Again, working close to the body's torso first and then working my way out.



With this style of stretching you can do them before your workout routine as part of your warmup. It's also great for your recovery days. For a video demonstrating how to do all of the techniques mentioned in this article, please take a look at the following VIDEO: <http://rosserchiro.com/stretching-videos>. Imagine that at this time next year you may be able to look back on a year of consistent stretching and all the progress you've made! January is a great time to add this to your annual plan. As always, good luck, and let me know if you have any questions about this article or the video.

Read more about Dr. Rosser's adventures in cycling at <http://.rosserchiro.com/blog>. He is the team chiropractor for the CBC/Olympia Orthopaedic Associates Racing Team, and assists other athletes in the community.



Some of us are born with flexibility,
the rest of us have to work for it!