

## Streeetch!

With the cooling down of the summer days, hopefully we are all getting better rest at night. We start off our mourning ritual of stretching to get the muscles moving and all of a sudden, POP! Something goes haywire in the back and the low back aching begins.

It's very common to begin the day's routine with a good stretch to get the muscles moving in the morning. But did you know that stretching a cold muscle is the easiest way to tear a muscle? Sure it feels good to get the blood moving into the extremities, but if you are looking for a good stretching regimen, here are some tips:

- If you are getting ready to exercise, it's a good idea to warm up by waking or lifting light weights to get blood to the muscles. Do some EASY limbering stretching, then save the more intense stretching for after you work out. Not only will this help alleviate soreness the next day, you will be able to get a better stretch because your muscles are loose.
  - If you are stiff in the morning and want to get limbered up, do some easy stretching. Don't push past the comfort zone and don't hold the stretches very long. This is called a movement stretch. For instance, if you want to stretch your hamstrings out, slowly reach down towards your toes till you feel tightness in the back of your legs, then come back up slowly. Repeat this three to four times and this will help.
  - After sitting at a desk for eight hours in a work day, backs and legs tighten up. If you can, take time during the day to stand at your desk and stretch, go for short walks instead of calling your coworkers (especially if they are in the same office with you!), and take time during your breaks to get some exercise.
- Stretching may not seem like it should be high on your importance list, but if you have issues like low back pain, a good stretching regimen is just the thing to help you feel better and loosen you up. Take the time to add stretching into your everyday routine and watch your posture and your spirits improve!