

## FLEXIBILITY INFORMATION

Maintaining adequate joint flexibility is important to functional health and range of motion as you age. The Back-Saver Sit and Reach tests the flexibility in your hamstring muscles. Research suggests improvement in athletic performance and decrease in the risk of injury during activity, the more flexible you are. It is important to maintain a regular program that involves overall body stretching. It promotes better posture and reduces stress as well. Stretching of the hamstring muscle should be done slowly with no bouncing.

The Fitnessgram **Healthy Fitness Zones** for the Back Saver Stretch are as Follows:

- All Boys Ages 12-20 need to reach 8 inches for the left and for the right leg.
- Girls Ages 12-14 need to reach 10 inches for the left and for the right leg.
- Girls Ages 15-20 need to reach 12 inches for the left and for the right leg.

Each leg needs to be tested separately.

Listed below are exercises you can do to increase flexibility of your hamstrings.

### **Med Ball Hamstring Curl**

In a supine position with a large diameter ball under your heels, raise your hips off the floor to a bridge position. With arms out to side on the floor for support, and ankles, knees, hips and back in alignment, bring your heels to your buttocks bending the knee joint. Stretch back out and repeat 10 times.

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### **Hamstring Stretch Out® Strap Sequence** (Hold all stretches for at least 10 seconds.)

1) Position a Stretch Out® Strap (SOS) end loop around the middle of the R foot. Lie back and try to pull the R foot toward the L shoulder. Push foot away from the shoulder while resisting with the SOS. Relax for a second, then, try to pull the foot closer to the shoulder. Continue to push foot away, relax and then pull the foot closer to the opposite shoulder until the foot is as close to the shoulder as possible. Remember to keep opposite knee bent.

2) Position around middle of L foot. Lie back with leg only slightly bent. Holding SOS with both hands, pull leg up. Try to push leg down while resisting with SOS. Relax for a second, then, pull leg higher. Continue to push leg away, relax, and pull toward same shoulder. Keep buttocks flat on floor.

3) Hook end loop of SOS around middle of R foot. Lie on your back, extending your legs in a spread position. Pull up on the SOS with both hands. Do not twist at the waist. Push R leg toward L leg while holding the strap tight. Relax a second. Pull the leg toward R shoulder without bending knee or twisting at the waist.

4) Hold an end loop in each hand and stand on the middle of the strap. Pull up on the strap. Flat back, head up, no locked knees. Relax. Reach down to next set of loops. Continue working your way down until you can touch palms to floor.

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### **Hamstring, Calf and Lower Back Stretch Out® Strap Exercise**

Sit on floor, legs out straight. The middle of the strap should go around the middle of your soles. Holding the 3<sup>rd</sup> set of loops in your hand, pull back on the SOS. Relax. Move forward, grasping the next set of loops. Head up and back flat. Continue until you can hold onto your feet. Hold all stretches for 10 seconds minimum.

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### **Hamstring and Calf Stretch Out® Strap Exercise**

Hook end loop around middle of R foot. Lying on L side, hold the rest of the strap with both hands. Bring R leg to a 45° angle, trying to straighten leg while resisting with the strap. Relax. Pull foot toward your chest while keeping the knee straight. Continue to relax and pull until the foot is as far forward as possible. Hold for minimum of 10 seconds.

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### **Hamstring and Lower Back Stretch Out® Strap Exercise**

Sit with legs flat on the floor, knees slightly bent. Put the center of the SOS over one shoulder and under the opposite arm. Hold the end loops one in each hand. Push against the strap with the upper back while resisting with your arms and hands. Relax. Pull your chest closer to your knees, keeping your head up. Continue to push against the strap with the upper back, relax and pull down moving the chest closer to the knees. Hold for 10 seconds

### **RESOURCES:**

**Stretch Out® Strap** Posters, designed by Lewie Dean, OTP, PO Box 47009, Minneapolis, MN 55447

**Ultrafit** Posters, Medicine Ball, by GOPHER

Additional Stretches can be found at: [health.usnews.com](http://health.usnews.com)

*Still have questions? Ask any of our Physical Education staff. Good Health to You!*