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Gastrocnemius and Soleus Muscle Stretching Exercises

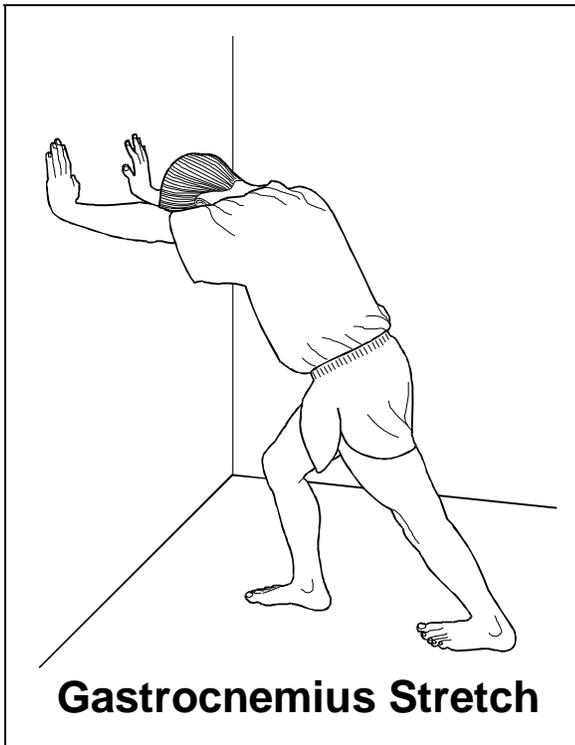


Figure 1. In the illustration above, the gastrocnemius muscle of the left leg is being stretched. To effectively stretch the gastrocnemius muscle the following technique must be followed. First, lean into a solid surface such as a wall and place the leg to be stretched behind the other leg. Second, make sure that the foot behind you is pointing straight ahead toward the wall. Third, tighten up the quadriceps (i.e. thigh muscles) of the leg that is being stretched so that the knee will be as straight as possible. Now gradually lean into the wall by slowly bending your elbows, with the heel of the foot always touching the ground. Just before the heel lifts from the ground, stop and hold the stretch for 10 seconds, keeping the knee straight during the whole stretch. It is critical that a bouncing, or up and down motion is not used during the stretch since less effective stretching will occur with a bouncing motion and injury is more likely to result.

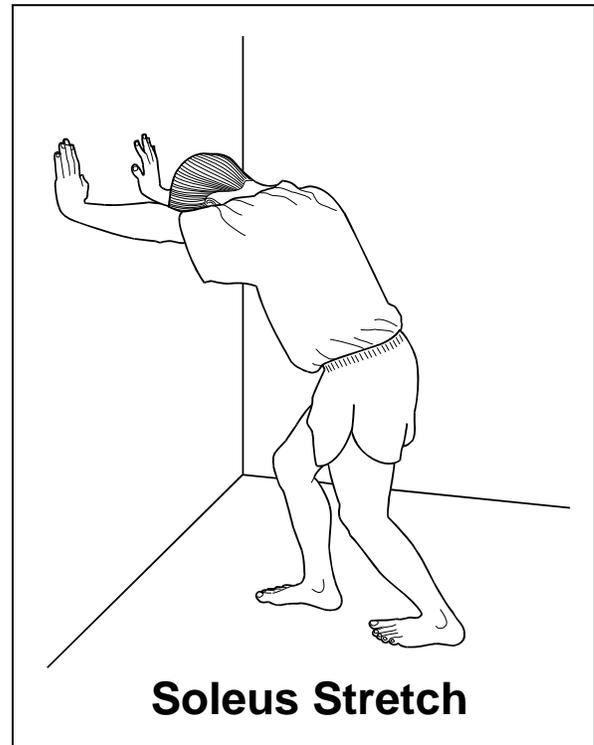


Figure 2. In the illustration above, the soleus muscle of the left leg is being stretched. To effectively stretch the soleus muscle the following technique must be followed. While keeping the back foot pointed straight ahead toward the wall and keeping the heel on the ground, the knee of the back leg must be flexed. During the soleus stretch, it helps to try to move your hips further away from the wall and to drive your back knee toward the ground, while still keeping your heel on the ground. Just before the heel lifts from the ground, stop and hold the stretch for 10 seconds, trying to allow the muscles of the lower calf to relax during the stretch. Again, no bouncing motions should occur during the stretch.

One set of stretching exercises for the gastrocnemius and soleus muscles includes a 10 second stretch of each muscle for both legs. Do at least three sets per stretching session.

Exercise Prescription for Gastrocnemius/Soleus Stretching: Sessions per day = _____