



## Stretch and Relaxation Tips

Focus on deep rhythmical breathing and allow the muscles to lengthen to the full range of motion and gently beyond within the zone of comfort. This is how flexibility gains are made.

Know the lines of pull of the muscles in order to design effective and safe stretches.

Always stretch to the point of tension not pain. Give permission for participants to modify the stretches to suit their needs. Assist by providing appropriate options.

Emphasize correct alignment to ensure joint safety and appropriate lengthening of the target muscle group.

Hold deep stretches for at least eight seconds, temperature permitting. Participants will feel the tension of a stretch ease after 6 to 10 seconds. This is the amount of time required for the 'muscle stretch reflex' to accommodate to the new length.

In warm water, after eight seconds, the stretched muscle can safely be lengthened further. This is 'progressive' or 'developmental' stretching. It is a very effective and safe way to increase flexibility.

It is not necessary to 'cling' to the beat of the music during this stretch and relaxation phase of the aquafitness class. Good music choices include classical, new age, ballads, and nature sounds.

It may be appropriate to turn off the music and have participants close their eyes and listen to the water and their own breathing while they relax.

Using a partner to assist while stretching may be appropriate for some groups. Correct technique and good listening skills are essential to prevent injury from overstretching.