

The 30 Pound Club

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Flexibility

Paula is in rehab again (I love saying that!) This time, it's for her newly repaired knee and the slipped disc in her jaw. She asked me a good question: why do physical therapists ask you to stretch two or three times a day, but it's okay to workout once a day to get fit? My answers were met with a certain degree of skepticism, so she asked her physical therapist Tom the same question. Here's a summary of what he said:

Connective tissue that covers muscles and tendons changes very slowly. If you've been injured, they're often shortened due to inactivity. Stretching several times per day helps to restore the range of motion in a joint faster. That's the primary objective of physical therapy—to help the joints achieve the maximal range of motion and restore full function to the joint. On the other hand, when you're working out hard to build muscle, you're causing damage and it's more effective to wait a day between workouts to give the muscle time to recover.

We all resist doing our stretches several times a day. Worse yet, we don't stretch at all. My knees feel much better if I do my squats every day to stretch my hamstrings. When do I remember to do them? When they tighten up and get sore.

What does flexibility have to do with weight loss? Plenty. Depending on how heavy you were when you started, you might have been restricted in your movements just because extra flesh was in the way. As you lose the fat, you'll be able to increase your range of motion. In addition, you didn't do the same kind of activities you're doing now—for example, the posture needed for ballroom dancing is very different from everyday posture, so back and neck stretching is helpful in achieving the correct body shape for foxtrot and waltz and so on. However you exercise, stretching to become more flexible is even more important as your weight comes down.

Tom said one more thing that I want to share with you when he was talking to another patient who was balking at doing some warm-up exercises:

Therapy is work. That's why we call it physical.

Getting lean and fit falls into that definition as well. Keep working at it and that 30 pounds will be a memory

One and Done.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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