

Get the MOST Out of Your Workouts with **MOVEMENT PREP EXERCISES!**

By: Dr. Brandon Crouch

It does not matter whether you are a professional athlete or just an amateur. It does not matter your age or if you would even call yourself an athlete. **EVERYONE** who works out wants to get the most from their work out. Let's face facts. Most of us like the effects of a good work out, but many do not like the actual process of working out. So if you want to get the most out of your time, effort, and sweat then try starting your workouts with "movement prep" exercises!

As children we were told to stretch before any form of activity or exercise. We were told stretching before exercise is like brushing our teeth before bed. It is good for us. A good traditional stretch and hold ("static" stretching) if done properly has tremendous value. That has not changed. What has changed is when you should do your "static" stretch and hold stretches. They are done best when the body is warmed up!

So what are Movement Prep Exercises?

The muscles and ligaments of the body are a lot like rubber bands. A warm rubber band will stretch a lot farther than cold one. (Have you ever tried to stretch a cold frozen rubber band? It does not work too well!) Movement preparation exercises are designed to "prepare" the body for "movement".

Movement prep exercises increases the heart rate, improves blood flow the muscles, and increases your core temperature. It also improves the function of the nervous system and increases speed and power output by 20% compared to static stretching!

So how does Movement Prep Exercises Work?

By performing movement prep exercises we improve the long-term mobility and flexibility of muscles. Traditional stretching will often allow for a stretch of the muscles but they will often return to the original position and length after the stretch. To improve upon the length and flexibility of a muscle we need to lengthen the muscle through active elongation (like a typical "static" stretch) and then contract the stretched muscle. This is the key difference.

By using (contracting) muscles in their elongated form instead of just returning to the beginning position you accomplish a couple of things. You strengthen those muscles in that new range of motion and you also increase stabilization of the muscles around your joints. By activating all the little stabilizer muscles around the joints they are ready to fire when they are needed. This increases performance while decreasing the risk of injury.

Getting started with Movement Prep Exercises?

This is why beginning with movement prep exercises can be so beneficial before any workout. They warm up your body, stabilize your joints, and prepare your muscles for your workout. Movement prep can improve your balance, proprioception, and is great for building mobility, flexibility, stability, and strength.

What's great about Movement Prep is that it requires no equipment and minimum time investment. In most cases 5 to 10 repetitions of each Movement Prep exercise is sufficient. This is usually done before any other stretching or exercise. It may feel a little like exercise but when your done you will feel "warmed up" and not worn down.

The best way to understand Movement Prep Exercises are to see them in action! Mark Verstegen's a master of movement prep has a great website that will show you step by step how to do these far better than a few pictures from me. I recommend you go to his website: www.coreperformance.com and in the search box in the upper right type in "movement prep". From there you will pull up hundreds of videos that will take you through different movement prep exercises. Two of my favorites are listed below:

1. **Movement Prep Inverted Hamstring Stretch (Backward)** - This movement is great for elongating the hamstrings and improving your balance

STARTING POSITION - Stand on one leg with perfect posture, arms straight and raised to 90 degrees and shoulder blades back and down.

PROCEDURE

- Keeping a straight line between the ear and the ankle, bend over at the waist and elevate your opposite leg behind you. (Keep leg straight)
- When you feel a stretch, return to the standing position by contracting your glute and hamstring, stepping back into the next step with your opposite leg.
- Repeat the motion, alternating legs with each step backward for the prescribed number of reps.

KEYS

- Keep the knee of the leg you are standing on slightly bent.
- Keep your back flat and your hips parallel to the ground.
- Maintain a straight line from your ear through your hip, knee, and ankle of your leg in the air.
- Try not to let your raised foot touch the ground between repetitions.

2. **Movement Prep Hip Crossover - Feet Down** - The Hip Crossover stretches and works the torso of the body

STARTING POSITION - Lying face up on ground with arms to the side, knees bent, and feet flat

PROCEDURE

- Let knees fall to left (Move Slow at first)

- Reverse to right
- Continue for prescribed number of repetitions

KEYS

- Keep shoulders on ground
- Keep knees together
- Keep stomach tight
- Do not let knees touch ground

Advanced Level:

1. Movement Prep Lateral Lunge
2. Movement Prep Backward Lunge with Lateral Flexion
3. Movement Prep Drop Lunge to Lateral Lunge

Put together at least 5 to 6 good movement prep exercises to start your routines and switch them every 3 to 4 weeks. If you were to do nothing else, mastering and performing the Movement Prep routine two to six times a week, if only for 10 minutes would greatly enhance your flexibility and stability. Also, remember to keep within your abilities and you will improve! Adding this to your pre-game or pre-exercise routine will help you maximize your workout!

**Disclaimer – Please do not start any new physical exercise or stretch routine prior to consulting your health professional. If any pain occurs please stop and consult with your health professional.

About the Author:

Dr. Brandon Crouch is a Chiropractor with Crouch Family Chiropractic and a Certified Golf Fitness Instructor through the Titleist Performance Institute. He may be reached for questions at: crouchfamilychiro@hotmail.com or by visiting his website at www.crouchfamilychiro.com.