

**DID YOU KNOW** that besides its muscle-building benefits, strength training also boosts your body's health? A new, small study shows that whole-body resistance training can help reduce chronic lower back pain. Published in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, the study showed that men and women who engaged in resistance training for 16 weeks experienced a 60% improvement in pain and functioning. Meanwhile, those who engaged in aerobics training for 16 weeks experienced only a 12% improvement in lower back pain. Besides pain reduction, the people who strength trained also improved in muscle strength, endurance and flexibility, and lost 15% of their body fat. Strength training is the key to fitness and overall health! *(LifeScript)*

**IMPORTANT STRETCHING INFORMATION** Although it's often prescribed as an injury-prevention measure, static stretching before a workout might be the worst of all strategies. Because it forces the target muscle to relax, it temporarily makes it weaker. As a result, a strength imbalance can occur between opposing muscle groups. For example, stretching your hamstrings causes them to become significantly weaker than your quadriceps. And that may make you more susceptible to muscle strains, pulls, and tears in the short term. Static stretching also reduces blood flow to your muscles and decreases the activity of your central nervous system -- meaning it inhibits your brain's ability to communicate with your muscles, which limits your capacity to generate force. The bottom line: Never perform static stretching before you work out or play sports. *(Men's Health)*

**DID YOU KNOW** that trying to stretch muscles that have not been warmed, is like trying to stretch old, dry rubber bands, they may snap? Warming up prior to stretching does a number of beneficial things, but primarily its purpose is to prepare the body and mind for more strenuous activity. One of the ways it achieves this is by helping to increase the body's core temperature while also increasing the body's muscle temperature. By increasing muscle temperature you are helping to make the muscles loose, supple and pliable. This is essential to ensure the maximum benefit is gained from your stretching. The correct warm-up, also has the effect of increasing both your heart rate and your respiratory rate. This increases blood flow, which in turn increases the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to the working muscles. All this helps to prepare the muscles and tendons for stretching. (The Stretching Institute)