

exercising options

Myrna Partrich

Taking the scientific approach to stretching

Dear Myrna:

I am an exercise instructor. You have been educating me for at least two years. Can you explain more about stretching? I would like more technical explanation of what a stretch is all about. I really appreciate your column.

Thank you. I'm glad to know that I've been helpful to you. I hope there are other instructors who benefit from my columns. Stretching just happens to be one of my favorite subjects. Many exercise instructors overlook the importance of stretching out their clients.

The first step toward learning proper stretching techniques is understanding what actually happens inside your body when you stretch. To stretch effectively, you must move in a way that will short-circuit one of your automatic nerve responses. This response is a stretch reflex, instantly triggered when you stretch incorrectly (too quickly).

WITHIN EACH muscle are microscopic sensory receptors called muscle spindles. When a muscle is stretched, the receptors send a message via the central nervous system to contract. This response is a protective mechanism that keeps the muscle from stretching too far and tearing.

You must override this reflex to stretch effectively. Holding a stretch in a comfortable position for at least 20 seconds is a correct, safe way to stretch.

The tendon's connective tissues, which join muscles to bones, also contain microscopic sensory receptors. These are called Golgi tendon organs. The Golgi tendon organs are stimulated (by stretching) and send a message telling the tendon to accommodate the stretch by lengthening. As the tendon lengthens, you increase the range of motion at that joint.

Very important — the Golgi tendon organs will override the stretch reflex if you hold a stretch long enough. If you stretch too quickly, you won't give the sensory receptors in the tendons enough time to kick in and cause the muscles to relax and the tendons to stretch. This is the way you must stretch slowly.

BOUNCING WHEN you stretch is called ballistic stretching. This will trigger your stretch reflex and cause muscle contraction, creating resistance, which could result in injury.

A third flexibility technique, proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (PNF), is popular among professional athletes. This type of stretching uses contraction for a short time, then stretching by lengthening the contracted area. We all inherit a certain amount of flexibility that can be increased slowly through stretching.

Work with your clients gently and with care. Listen to their needs. Ask them how they feel during stretching.

outdoors

NEW FISHING PIERS

The Huron-Clinton Metropark Authority recently received a grant payment check for \$7,800 from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to be used for the construction of two T-shaped fishing piers along the southwest shore of Kent Lake in Kensington Metropark.

The piers will provide shoreline access to a deeper portion of Kent Lake and also will allow handicapped access to the lake via the paved bike/bike trail.

The grant is a 50-50 cost share cooperative grant-in-aid program. The Metropark Authority is also contributing \$7,800.

STREAMS CLOSED

In order to protect large concentrations of spawning fish, Director David Hales, of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, has ordered six additional stream areas to be closed to fishing during designated time periods.

The order, which takes place immediately and remains effective through March 31, 1992, includes the following areas and time periods: Pine River — upstream from State Rd., closed March 1 to the Friday before the last Saturday in April.

Saginaw Creek — upstream from State Rd., closed March 1 to the Friday before the last Saturday in April.

East Branch Au Gres River — between the DNR lamprey barrier and Sand Lake Rd., closed Jan. 1 to June 30.

Muskegon River — Rogers Dam to the southbound lane of U.S. 131, closed March 1 to the Friday before the last Saturday in April.

Titabawassee River — between Sanford Dam and the mouth of the Salt River also between the Dow Dam and the Gordonville Bridge,

closed March 1 to the Friday before the last Saturday in April. Additional closures are listed in the 1989 Fishing Guide. These new closures will be listed in the 1990 Michigan Fishing Guide, scheduled to be released this month.

EARTH DAY AWARDS

Students in fourth, fifth and sixth grades in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw and Livingston counties are urged to participate in the Earth Day 1990 Writing and Art Contest, sponsored by the Huron-Clinton Metroparks.

The contest is divided into three divisions: Fourth Grade — poetry consisting of eight lines or less, rhymed or free verse, typed or printed with a title. Fifth Grade — Essay or story consisting of 300 words or less, typed or printed with a title.

Sixth Grade — Poster, consisting of flat work only with a maximum size of 24"x30" including mat or frame.

Ten prizes (U.S. Savings Bonds) will be awarded at each level. Prizes include \$500 — first place; \$200 — second place; \$100 — third place; \$50 — fourth through 10th place.

Entry deadline is March 4. Entry forms are available at all Metropark Nature Centers or by calling the Metroparks at 1-800-47-PARKS.

POSTER CONTESTS

In honor of the 20th Anniversary of Earth Day the Michigan Department of Natural Resources is holding a poster contest for children in grades kindergarten through 12.

Only posters depicting the following four themes will be accepted: Earth Day 1990 — Care about Clean Air; Earth Day 1990 — Care about Clean Water; Earth Day 1990 — Recycle Michigan; Earth Day 1990 —

Protect Michigan's Future.

Entry deadline is March 22. For more information call the DNR Air Quality Division at 517-373-7023.

EAGLE NUMBERS UP

Due to the dramatic growth of the American Bald Eagle population in recent years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced that it will undertake a comprehensive review of the population to determine if the species may warrant a reclassification from endangered to the less critical threatened category under the Endangered Species Act.

Currently, bald eagles are listed as endangered in 43 states and threatened in Michigan, Oregon, Washington, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Bald eagles have never been listed in Alaska, where the population has thrived and now numbers close to 30,000. Bald eagles do not occur in Hawaii.

With estimates as low as 400 nesting pairs in the conterminous states in the early 1960s, the bald eagle was listed on the very first endan-

ENVIRONMENTAL MAGAZINE

To Commemorate the 20th anniversary of Earth Day, the Michigan United Conservation Clubs will launch a new general-circulation magazine devoted exclusively to topics on environmental quality in Michigan and the Great Lakes Basin.

TUEBOR, a 48-page, bi-monthly magazine will make its debut on April 1, 1990. Editorial content will cover such matters as acid rain, the disposal of toxic and hazardous wastes, Great Lakes water quality, air pollution, solid waste disposal and recycling, fish consumption advisories and related subjects. Each issue will feature editorial stands on current environmental concerns and include a section of letters to the editor.

For more information call MUCC at (517) 371-1041.

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