

Dynamic Flexibility Drills for Racewalkers

©1997 Dave McGovern--Dave's World Class

Flexibility training is an undeniably important part of racewalk training. And most walkers do spend some time stretching before or after training. But these stretches are usually static stretches. Static stretches can probably help prevent injuries and loosen tight muscles after training. But walking is a dynamic event that requires dynamic flexibility during training and racing. Try some of these before racewalking:

- **Leg Swings:** Stand sideways next to a wall or fence. Swing your outside leg front to back, bending the knee as the leg comes forward, straightening on the way back. Accentuate the back portion of the swing to stretch the hamstring, gluteus and lower back muscles. Do 15 - 20 swings, then turn around and repeat with the other leg. Swinging the outside arm the opposite direction of the leg will help develop bilateral coordination.



- **Side Swings:** Stand about two feet from the wall or fence with feet about shoulder-length apart. Hold on to the wall or fence, then swing the right leg to the outside, then to the inside to stretch the groin and outside of the hip.



- **Hip Wangers:** Again, hold on to the wall or fence with feet about shoulder-length apart. Keeping arms outstretched, "lean" into the wall with your pelvis then circumscribe a large circle with the hips to stretch the entire pelvic area. Do 8 - 10 circles clockwise, then counter-clockwise. Named after Mel McGinnis, a 50 km National Team member who became a minister in 1986. Mel once performed a version of the hip wanger during a sermon at the 1986 Olympic Festival to graphically portray the evils of "Wild" dancing and other excesses.



- **Knee Pumps:** Again, hold onto the fence, with feet together about 4 -5 feet from the fence. Stand on the balls of your feet without bending at the waist. Pump each knee forward quickly, rolling up onto the toes of the pumping foot. Pump each leg forwards and back 12 - 20 times.



- **Swedish Twists:** Grab that fence again, standing about 2 feet away. Tuck your right foot behind your left knee. Swing the right knee towards the fence, then back, keeping the foot tucked behind the knee. Repeat 12 - 20 times, then repeat with the other leg. Great for the lower back and groin. Most drills are pretty universal, but I've only seen these in Sweden.



- **Hurdler's Drill:** Standing about three feet from the fence, lift one leg out to the side with knee bent, as if over an imaginary hurdle. Do five circles on each leg. Great groin stretch.



- **Torso Twists:** No fence! Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, arms outstretched and parallel to each other. Keeping feet planted, twist the torso fully by swinging the arms to the left, then to the right. Repeat 12 - 20 times. Great for the lower back and shoulders.



- **The Twist:** Standing with feet shoulder-width apart, slowly twist the torso fully to the left. Now jump up, twisting the torso fully to the right, and the feet to the left. Repeat quickly 10 - 12 times. The lower body should twist counter-clockwise as the upper body twists clockwise and vice versa. Great for the lower back.



- **Arm Swings:** With palms facing outward and elbows straight, "backstroke" with each arm, holding the shoulder close to the ear. Do 12 - 20 with each arm for upper body flexibility. Doing both arms at the same time, 180 degrees apart is good for coordination development.



- **Toe Touches:** Take a small step forward. With legs straight, gently bend down and touch your toes, then stand up straight. Repeat five times each leg.



- **Long Arms:** Racewalk slowly with arms straight, palms facing back. Push off the tips of the toes to accentuate the back part of your stride. Helps to teach toe push-off, opens up the hips and stretches the groin.



- **Quick Steps:** Self explanatory. Walk with an extremely short stride, one heel landing almost on top of the toes of the other foot. Take very quick steps. Teaches quick turnover, and short stride in front of the body.



Spending 5 or 10 minutes doing dynamic flexibility drills before each workout will give you better range of motion for your workout, and help you to develop lasting racewalking-specific coordination.

[*Return to homepage](#)
