

7 Simple Stretches for Cyclists



STRETCH #1: CALVES

Standing with your feet pointed straight ahead, step forward with your right leg and bend your knee, keeping your left foot firmly planted on the ground behind you. Keep your upper-body erect and drop your hips forward until you feel the stretch in your calf (don't bend over at the waist use your hips to move) Hold for 15-30 seconds, then swap.

STRETCH #2: QUADRICEPS AND HIP FLEXORS

Standing on your left leg, reach back with your right hand and grab your right foot at the top of the ankle, and pull up towards your bum. Extend the knee back further and lean back a little to get the hip flexors. These muscles are big and deserve a very slow stretch, careful not to pull too hard too fast. Hold for 15-30 seconds, then swap.

STRETCH #3: IT BAND

The IT Band runs down the side of your leg and helps in balance and control; the section of this band that affects cyclists is between the hip and knee. A tight or inflamed IT band can cause tendonitis or knee alignment issues. Stretch from a sitting position: cross the left leg across the right knee and gently push down on the left knee. You should feel the stretch on the outside of your leg. Hold for 15-30 seconds, then swap.

STRETCH #4: HAMSTRINGS

The pedalling motion develops short and powerful hamstrings. Unlike running, which lengthens hamstrings, cyclists are prone to tightness in these muscles. This is why your "hams" might ache if you're a cyclist who runs on occasion. This makes it very important to stretch hamstrings slowly and carefully. Standing, bend over at the waist and let your arms dangle toward the ground, letting the knees bend slightly outward. This stretch benefits greatly from deep, steady breathing you'll find that you can touch the ground after several slow, deep breaths.

STRETCH #5: GLUTEUS

The gluteal muscles are perhaps the most oft-overlooked muscles in cycling stretching. From a cross-legged sitting position on the floor, angle your left leg over the right and plant left foot next to right knee, so your left leg forms a triangle. Grasp the front of your left knee and lean forward, careful to keep your back straight. Feel the stretch along your left hamstring. This releases the piriformis, a connecting muscle that often tightens after sitting on a saddle. Perform this stretch with both legs.

STRETCH #6: NECK AND SHOULDERS

Checking for traffic and other riders behind you or holding your head up while in a TT position is where the neck muscles come into play. Standing, slowly turn your head side to side then up and down. Also tilt your head by bringing your ear to your shoulder on both sides. Shrug your shoulders upwards and hold for five seconds. Repeat several times.

STRETCH #7: CORE

Your abdomen and back muscles are the support system for your legs as they pedal. The best stretch is actually doing crunches or back extensions to help strengthen these varied muscles. You can do a simple back twist from the gluteus-stretch position, by twisting your trunk to look behind, one side and then the other. Feel the stretch in your abdomen.