

Does stretching help older people become better runners? Absolutely! It is incredibly important to stretch before running for many different reasons. Most runners are able to run for longer distances if they have done a good stretch before. You always hear about how you should stretch before a good workout, but do you know why? Proper stretching preceding a workout will decrease lactic acid buildup. Cramps and leg or foot pain are caused by a decrease in oxygen to the muscles, which then causes a lactic acid build up. When lactic acid builds up it causes a cramp. So if you stretch before you run, pain in your muscles legs and feet will be decreased.

Do runners lose flexibility as they age? Not necessarily. The more you exercise the more flexible your muscles are. The more flexible your muscles are the longer you can run. Stretching routinely will provide you the ability to continue running with minimal cramping and discomfort. Normal aging probably won't decrease flexibility. However, if a person decreases their exercise regiment their ability to run will decrease from loss of muscle tone.

Routine stretching before and after running are important for the ability to run. As we age muscle atrophy, or muscle break down, occurs if we stop using certain muscles. Stretching exercises to prevent muscle breakdown is very important.

Flexibility and ability to run is not truly age dependent, but dependent on several factors: muscle tone, muscle use, and proper stretching both before and after exercise. If possible never lead a sedentary life and always develop a plan to stretch and strengthen your muscles.