

STRETCHES TO HELP CYCLISTS GET MORE AERO

Kneeling Lunge



To get relief from blood pooling and muscle bloating, pro cyclists receive massage almost daily and spend a great deal of time with their legs elevated. The same benefit can be realized with a lunge stretch.

To recover from cycling, the emphasis should be on elongating and circulating the compressed areas of the hip and lower back. This will give your legs the opportunity they need to recover faster and more completely.

The lunge stretch focuses on the quadriceps and iliopsoas muscles, and the lymph nodes at the lower abdomen. This will stimulate recovery of the legs and create elasticity of the quad area while the lower back elongates.

- Begin with the top of your right foot on the edge of a chair or the floor.
- Place your right knee on the ground on top of a folded towel and move your right foot forward.
- Place your hands on your knee or the floor.
- Inhale, lifting your chest and extending your spine.
- When you exhale, move your lower abdomen area back. This rotates your hips to create a stretch in the front of your thigh.
- Rotate the right hip inward.
- Hold the stretch for five to 12 breaths.
- Switch legs and repeat.

During this lunge you should feel a strong stretch in the front of the leg, but it should be comfortable. If you go too hard, you won't receive the benefits of the stretch. Look for that fine line between pleasure and pain and let pleasure be dominant for best results.

Pure Hip

While cycling, the top of the hips rotate forward and this fixed position is maintained for hours at a time. Even the best position on a bike can change over time and with different bikes. But all positions should be comfortable and aid the extension of the lower back.

Often as an athlete develops strength in the back muscles, a corresponding tension and immobility can develop in the lower back. Much of this lower-back tension on the bike can be avoided by moving the hips back and the torso forward.

I recommend this next stretch to every athlete I've worked with and it's a favorite. Pure hip is easy to do and targets several muscle groups.



- Lie on your back with your right foot on the wall and the right knee slightly bent.
- Cross your left ankle over your right thigh, just below the right knee. The ankle stays flexed.
- Use your left hand to support your left knee.
- Maintain this position for five to 12 breaths.
- Repeat with the other leg.

The pure hip stretch has a small risk at the knee, so be certain to support the inside of the knee with your free hand. Also, if you change the distance of your hips in relationship to the wall you'll access some different muscles within the stretch.

A final adjustment can be made by moving the right foot farther down the wall.

Inner-Leg Lengthener



The role of the inner-leg muscles in cycling is multifunctional. The muscles are involved in flexion and extension of the leg, but the inner leg is home to the large veins, arteries and lymph ducts. These circulation pathways add to the work of the inner leg during exercise and recovery. It's no wonder that the inner leg is such a common area to strain.

Because the inner leg is prone to injury and is easy to hurt when stretching, the stretch must be done with care. To reduce the risk, this next stretch is done with the feet on the wall and the knees bent.

- Lie on your back with your hips near a wall, bed or couch.
- If you're tight, move farther away from the wall.
- Place the outside edges of your feet on the wall. Keep your knees bent and your ankles straight above the knees in a line perpendicular to the floor.
- Support the inside of the knees with your hands.
- Hold this position for five to 12 breaths.

When stretching the inner leg, let time and gravity help—never force a stretch. If you spend time in this stretch, the benefits will be realized. The hands can be on the inside of the knees for support and apply a little pressure in an outward direction.

Pigeon Pose

To work your glutes, kneel on the floor with one leg extended behind and the other bent at a 45-degree angle in front of you, ankle and knee touching the floor. If you can't get your knee to the floor, put a folded towel under the knee. Keeping your hips square, ease your pelvis toward the floor. Next, tilt forward and lower your chest toward the floor. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.



Hamstring Stretch

Longer hamstrings let the pelvis tilt forward on the saddle, allowing for a more aero position. Plus, you'll get your glutes—the body's strongest muscles—more involved in pedaling. If you're deficient in this area, stand with feet hip-width apart and slowly bend at the waist, tilting your pelvis forward and keeping your back straight. Pause for 10 to 15 seconds when you feel a slight stretch in the back of your legs, then deepen the pose until you feel the hamstrings relax.

The purpose of stretching is to allow the whole system to recover. If you push past the initial sensation of tension in your stretch, you'll hinder progress. When you feel the stretch in an area, go easy. Flexibility isn't a competitive activity and can be over-done. Pay close attention to how you feel—expand your boundaries and stay within your limits.