

## Warming Up

A tennis player recently asked me, "What would be the best thing for me to do in the next 10 minutes before my match begins." When I recommended that he warm up, he promptly laid down and began stretching. I realized that many people equate "warm up" with stretching but they're actually two different activities. Warming up means, quite literally, increasing the blood flow to the body's muscles, organs and glands.

Although stretching is important, it doesn't increase the blood flow in your body. Just like rubbing your hands together when you're cold increases the blood flow to make them warm, you need an exercise that does the same thing for the rest of your body. Choose a low heart rate, low intensity exercise like walking, Nordic track or StairMaster. Start slowly and gradually work your way up until you hit your target heart rate (see the charts in the cardio room). Ten minutes is an adequate time for your muscles to warm up, then you can launch into harder, physical activities.

The benefits from a warm up like this are substantial: reduce your chance of injury, improve your performance, and get better overall health benefits from your activity. So remember when you're getting the outside of your body ready for exercise by lacing up those shoes and putting on your gear, don't forget about preparing the inside of your body as well.

Dr. Rick