

MOBILITY ROUTINE FOR MASTERS SWIMMERS



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Images: Hannah Lawton

Sources: Western Australian Institute of Sport, Australian Institute of Sport and attendance at High Performance Swimming Clinics conducted by Swimming Australia.

The benefits of a mobility routine include ;

- enhanced neuromuscular control (mind/body connection),
- better blood flow to articular surfaces of joints, connective tissue and muscle,
- better active (usable) range of motion,
- faster recovery, and
- decreased likelihood of injury.

There are many mobility routines around and this is just one example of a simple, swim specific routine targeting the muscles we need in order to swim safely and efficiently. This routine can be added to or changed to suit the individual swimmer.

As with any exercise routine, ease into each exercise and be gentle on yourself until you know how each exercise affects your body. You may find you are a little sore in the day or two after completing the exercises (delayed onset muscular soreness – DOMS) if you have not done this kind of activity previously. This soreness will pass and with consistency, you will have less and less soreness.

Repetition is key here, so complete the routine weekly, every few days or daily to gain maximum benefit. The order you complete the exercises is not important.

PLEASE NOTE: as coaches, we are not acting in the role of therapists of any kind. Swimmers should always be encouraged to self-monitor and follow the advice of their own health care practitioner. These are general mobility guidelines only.

ESTABLISH A BASE LINE - FORWARD FOLD

Standing with your feet shoulder width apart, with loose (not bent) knees, drive hips backwards and bend from the hips with a straight back. Pay attention to;

- how far you can fold forward without bending the spine i.e. I can touch my knees
- how it feels in different parts of your body ie. hamstrings are tight, shoulders are stiff

Note: hold for around 10 seconds before gently standing up.

Alternative: If a swimmer is not confident to forward fold from standing, they can sit on the ground with legs outstretched and forward fold towards the feet.



Straight Back



Curled Back

MOVEMENT 1 - UPPER BACK

- Place a foam roller or a tightly rolled towel, lengthways across the middle/top of your shoulder blades, below the neck.
- Support your neck (as pictured) and start with your knees bent up.
- Pull your ribs down (pelvis tilted up) so your back is straight, not arched.
- Extend your legs and arms into streamline position, if possible. Head remains neutral. Keep pulling your ribs down so your back is not arched.
- Hold for 30-60 seconds

Targets: Upper back and shoulder mobility.

Benefit: Overhead reach and upright posture (in life and in swimming).
Stronger streamline.



Avoid arching of the back



NOTE: encourage swimmers to only go to the point in each exercise where they are 'comfortably uncomfortable' but not in pain and can hold the position correctly for 30-60 seconds. There is no value in proceeding though the exercise incorrectly. For some swimmers, this may mean they can only perform the first one or two positions.

MOVEMENT 2 - HIPS

Grab hold of a pole or wall for stability on this one, if needed.

- Kneel on a soft surface to protect your knees, with the other leg at 90* in front of you.
- Pull your ribs down (pelvis tilted up) so your back is straight, not arched. Squeeze your glutes (your bottom).
- Grab your back foot and pull gently towards your glutes. Keep chest upright. Hold on to something stable if needed.
- Reach overhead, into streamline with the same arm as the knee on the ground.
- You can also use a wall to perform this exercise. See image below.

Alternative: For swimmers who are unable to kneel, the alternative positioning is shown in the picture, lying on a bench. Be sure to drive the heel into the ground to open the hip.

Targets: Hip flexors

Benefit: Improves balance and co-ordination, general stability with walking.



NOTE: encourage swimmers to only go to the point in each exercise where they are 'comfortably uncomfortable' but not in pain and can hold the position correctly for 30-60 seconds. There is no value in proceeding though the exercise incorrectly. For some swimmers, this may mean they can only perform the first one or two positions.

TEST FORWARD FOLD

Standing with your feet shoulder width apart, with loose (not bent) knees, drive hips backwards and bend from the hips with a straight back. Pay attention to any changes in;

- how far you can fold forward without bending the spine i.e. I can now touch my shins
- how it feels in different parts of your body ie. hamstrings are not so tight, shoulders are still stiff

Note: hold for around 10 seconds before gently standing up.

Alternative: If a swimmer is not confident to forward fold from standing, they can sit on the ground with legs outstretched and forward fold towards the feet.



MOVEMENT 3 - ACHILLES / CALVES

Holding onto a wall or solid surface ;

- Place the ball of your foot against the wall and straighten (do not lock) your knee
- Squeeze your glutes (your bottom) and you will feel your hip open.

For many people this may be the extent of the exercise for them as they may be very tight in the achilles and calf. In this case, do not take swimmer any further. If ok, proceed to;

- Push hips towards the wall without bending at the hip. Hip should be forward of the chest. Use the rear foot for support.
- Hold for 30-60 seconds

Alternative: For swimmers who are unable to stand in this position, they can sit in a chair and place a rope/band/towel around the ball of the foot, and pull gently upwards with a straight leg.

Targets: Achilles and calves

Benefit: Improves co-ordination, general stability with walking. Improves circulation. Decreases chance of injury.



NOTE: encourage swimmers to only go to the point in each exercise where they are 'comfortably uncomfortable' but not in pain and can hold the position correctly for 30-60 seconds. There is no value in proceeding though the exercise incorrectly. For some swimmers, this may mean they can only perform the first one or two positions.

MOVEMENT 4 - HAMSTRING

Using a soft surface to kneel on, place one knee on the ground and extend other leg straight in front.

Proceed gently!

- With a straight and upright spine, squeeze the glutes (your bottom). Pull the hip of the leg that is extended back so it is square with the other hip
- Driving the hips backwards and folding forward with a straight spine, slide your hands slowly down your leg.
- Hold for 30-60 seconds

Alternative: If a swimmer is unable to kneel, the alternative movement can be done on the back.

Use a band/towel around the foot, if needed.

Targets: Hamstrings, glutes, lower back

Benefits: Injury prevention. If your hamstrings are tight, they can pull your pelvis down, increasing your risk of throwing your back, hips or knees out of alignment during times of physical activity.



Alternative

TEST FORWARD FOLD

Standing with your feet shoulder width apart, with loose (not bent) knees, drive hips backwards and bend from the hips with a straight back. Pay attention to any changes in;

- how far you can fold forward without bending the spine. Is it beginning to feel better than previously?
- how it feels in different parts of your body ie. hamstrings are looser, shoulders are loosening.

Note: hold for around 10 seconds before gently standing up.

Alternative: If a swimmer is not confident to forward fold from standing, they can sit on the ground with legs outstretched and forward fold towards the feet.



NOTE: encourage swimmers to only go to the point in each exercise where they are 'comfortably uncomfortable' but not in pain and can hold the position correctly for 30-60 seconds. There is no value in proceeding though the exercise incorrectly. For some swimmers, this may mean they can only perform the first one or two positions.

MOVEMENT 5 - SQUATS

Standing with your feet shoulder width apart;

- drive hips backwards
- bend from the knees with a straight back
- keep chest upright

Alternative: For swimmers who are unsteady on their feet and using a stable chair behind you (or a step/couch) drive hips backwards as if sitting into the chair, without sitting in the chair. Stop just short of touching the chair.



Note: complete 3-5 squats ONLY. Unless swimmer is conditioned in squats, limit the number they complete and build up slowly over time.

SO...WHY A MOBILITY ROUTINE?

- Greater range of motion in joints and muscles
- Improved strength and stability that transfers into our swimming as well as everyday life
- Reduced risk of injury
- Improved technique



Do you struggle to grab the block when you dive?



If you can grab the block, is your back straight and strong?



How is your streamline?

If you have any comments or questions, please contact Coach and Swimmer Development Coordinator, Kareena Preston on coaching@mswa.asn.au