

## A Simple Stretch for “Sinkers!”

by Lisa Hiller

If you’ve tried every trick in the book to help your body stay level and balanced while swimming and your legs STILL continue sinking to the bottom of the pool, your coach may affectionately refer to you as “a sinker.” Stretching and lengthening your hip flexors can help you go from being a “sinker” to a balanced swimmer. A simple stretch may be all you need!

Our hip flexors are the muscles in the front of the hip that shorten or contract to lift your leg up from a standing position. If your hip flexors are tight and in a state of constant contraction, this would translate into drawing your legs forward and ultimately downward in the water. While there are many hip flexor stretches that strength and conditioning coaches employ, my “go-to” stretch is a bit unconventional and makes use of a stability ball. As an avid runner and triathlete who is always trying to stay one step ahead of injury, I consider this to be, hands down, one of the best hip flexor stretching exercises.

How to do it: Find the largest stability ball available to you (75 cm. is preferable). From a standing position, squat behind the ball on the balls of your feet with feet slightly turned out and all toes in contact with the floor. Straddle the ball with your knees and lower your abdomen and pubic bone onto the ball. Relax or drape your body over the ball. Rock forward, pushing off your toes and gently landing forward onto your hands. Then, push off your hands to gently rock backwards onto the balls of feet, cushioning the backward roll with legs. Keep your chin on the ball at all times. Lengthen your spine so that the top of your head and your tailbone lengthen in the opposite direction. Each time you rock backwards and land on your toes you will feel a wonderful stretch of the hip flexors. This is also an excellent stretch for breaststrokers. Do 8 to 10 repetitions of this move daily to prevent injury and to stay afloat!



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