Warm it up
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Your 1 hour lunch break could equate to 5 minutes walking to the gym, 30 minutes to exercise, 5 minutes walk back to work, and 20 minutes to eat. So what part of your workout do you eliminate: a) the warm-up b) cardiovascular and or weight training c) the cool down or d) none of the above. The answer? None of the above, since all of those elements are important factors to your exercise program.

This article will highlight the importance of the warm-up phase which is generally omitted from an exercise program when time is of the essence. However, understanding the benefits of warming up would quickly make you change your mind. There are many benefits to warming up such as reducing the risk of injury to muscles and or joints, increasing the range of motion in ligaments and tendons; improve muscle performance, and preventing Ischemia (lack of oxygen) to the heart muscle.

An adequate warm-up routine can be completed in 5-10 minutes, and should consist of raising you core body temperature first and then implementing flexibility exercises second. The best way to increase your core body temperature is by performing “activities similar to which you are about to perform at approximately 50% of the intensity.” For example if you plan on jogging on a treadmill at a speed of 6 m.p.h. you should warm up doing 3 m.p.h. or less. ACSM recommends static stretching as a modality for flexibility should be done before working out for the general population. Static stretching is defined by ACSM as “slowly stretching a muscle to the end of range of motion (the point of tightness without invoking discomfort) and then holding that position for an extended period of time.” You should never bounce when performing static stretches. To maintain and improve range of motion static stretching should be performed at a minimum of 2 to 3 days a week holding each stretch for 15 to 30 seconds. Also, be aware ACSM states that “flexibility is specific to each joint and affected by many factors.”

Warming up is the beginning to a successful exercise routine and by performing it correctly you will not only prevent injury you will increase muscle performance. So, don’t forget to use 5 to 10 minutes of your workout to warm-up. Your body will thank you.