

## WARMING UP

(Emb)

It happens all the time. Little Leaguers arrive at the field for practice or a game and the first thing they do is to play catch. It seems natural to think that the best way to warm up to play baseball is to play catch. *But it isn't.*

There is an old coaches' saying: *"Warm up to throw, don't throw to warm up."* Baseball is made up of a lot of short, quick movements that interrupt periods of standing still. Each of these bursts of activity – especially throwing – puts a lot of strain on your muscles.

*It is your responsibility to warm up properly prior to any game or practice* to reduce the possibility to strain by doing stretching exercises. They are easy to do, will give you greater flexibility, and help keep you healthy.

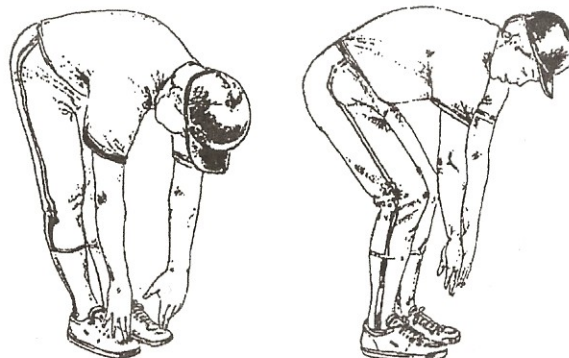
## WARM-UPS AND STRETCHES

A Note: Your muscles will stretch better if you don't bob up and down when you exercise. Long, slow, fluid movements that put pressure on your muscles will help them stretch much better than if you bounce up and down or back and forth.

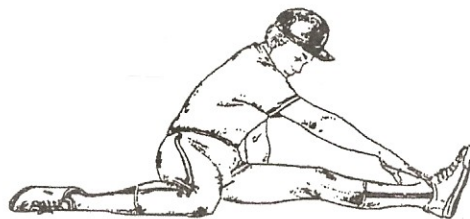
**JUMPING JACKS:** Start by standing up straight, then hop and spread your legs about shoulder-width apart while at the same time raising your hands above your head, jumping jacks are a staple of gym-class calisthenics drills for good reason. They are an effective way to warm up and loosen all your muscles at the same time.



**TOE TOUCHING:** Another traditional calisthenic, toe touching loosens the hamstrings (the muscles that run up the back of your leg, from your hip to your knee) and stretches out your back and shoulder muscles. Bend over and touch your toes, but don't bob right back up. Linger for a few seconds and feel your hamstrings stretch, bend your knees, then straighten up and repeat.



**HURDLER'S STRETCH:** Get down on the ground, tuck one leg back, and lay the other out in front of you with the toe pointing straight up. Lean forward and touch your outstretched ankle.



The hurdler's stretch is a particularly good method for loosening your hamstrings. After you've stretched out one leg, switch sides and repeat for the other. And remember, don't bob forward and back: touch your ankle and hold for a few beats, then release slowly.



**TRUNK TWISTERS:** Stand and spread your feet a little more than shoulder-width apart. Put your hands on the back of your neck with your elbows spread straight out. Rotate your elbows (along with your head) by twisting your whole upper body back and forth. Trunk twisters stretch your back and hips.



**HAMMERLOCK:** Spread your feet a little more than shoulder-width apart. Raise one arm straight up in the air, then bend it at the elbow and put your hand on your upper back, between your shoulder blades.

Your forearm should rest on the back of your head. Put the other hand on your raised elbow. Pull with a gentle, constant pressure toward the back of your head. The hammerlock helps stretch out your shoulders.



**CHOKE HOLD:** Spread your feet a little more than shoulder-width apart. Reach with one arm around your neck and touch your shoulder blade. With your hand, gently push backward on your elbow with constant pressure. The choke hold is another exercise that helps you stretch out your shoulders.