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# Essential Hip Mobility for Runners

Kristina Pattison - July 25, 2017

Ultra-distance mountain running requires countless hours of disciplined training, planning, navigation, and finally execution. During the process, the self-care routine can easily fall through the cracks. However, just 5-10 minutes a day of mobility work can help maintain essential range of motion of key joints. Mobility allows the body to move more fluidly, with more precision, and ultimately with lower risk for injury.



Ultrarunner Kristina Pattison on Holland Peak in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, Montana



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by Kristina Pattison, DPT, CSCS

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The muscles that are most often detrimentally short and/or stiff in runners are the hip flexors at the front of the hip and thigh—muscles such as the tensor fascia latae that bring the knee toward the chest—and the knee extensors at the front of the thigh—the quadriceps that straighten the knee and help to flex the hip. These muscles become stiff with repetitive use, and then they often stay in a shortened position with extended sitting at work or home.

The following mobility activities help maintain extensibility of the tissues at the front of the hip, protecting the back from overarching during hip extension at push off, and allowing the gluteal muscles to work through their full range, contributing to speed and power. For more information on strengthening the gluteal muscles see:

Four Moves to Boost the Runners Most Valuable Asset  
Two Dynamic Hip Strengtheners for Mountain Runners

## Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch

Perform a Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch on one knee with one or both hands reaching to the sky to create a long line from the fingertips to knee. Keeping the shoulders pulled back and down, maintaining a long neck, and keeping the back straight and hips level, rock forward slightly onto the front foot. The kneeling knee will be slightly behind the hip. Contract abs and glutes and hold for at least 30-60 seconds. You should feel this stretch at the front of the thigh and hip on the supporting leg.



The Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch for runners. Photo: Kristina Pattison.

**Tip:** Keep your abs and glutes engaged the entire time to ensure your back stays straight and your hips stay level.

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## Twisted Lizard

Perform Twisted Lizard Stretch on one knee with opposite hand planted by your foot. Reach to the sky with your free arm, creating a rotation through the trunk. Keep the shoulders pulled back and down and maintain a long neck and back, rock forward slightly onto the front foot. The kneeling knee will be slightly behind the hip. Contract abs and glutes and hold for at least 30-60 seconds. You should feel this stretch at the front of the thigh and hip on the back leg.



**Tip: Try to make the distance between your hands as far as possible to open the chest.**

## The Long Lunge

Perform Long Lunge Stretch with back leg completely straight. Keeping the shoulders pulled back and down, maintaining a long neck, and keeping the back straight and hips level, rock forward slightly onto the front foot. Contract abs and glutes and hold for at least 30-60 seconds. You should feel this stretch at the front of the thigh and hip on the back leg.



**Tip: Ensure the back leg is completely straight by engaging the quad fully to maximize the stretch at the front of the hip.**

## Twisted Long Lunge

Perform Twisted Long Lunge Stretch on one knee with opposite hand planted by your foot. Reach to the sky with your free arm, creating a rotation through the trunk. Keeping the shoulders pulled back and down and maintaining a long neck and back, straighten the back knee completely. The kneeling knee will be slightly behind the hip. Contract abs and glutes and hold for at least 30-60 seconds. You should feel this stretch at the front of the thigh and hip on the back leg.



**Tip: Ensure the back leg is completely straight by engaging the quad fully to maximize the stretch at the front of the hip.**