



The Truth About Stretching

By Ekemba Sooh Health and Fitness Practitioner

It is a common occurrence for people to approach me while I am stretching or stretching my clients and ask, "What are you doing?" These advanced techniques are called Myofascial Stretching and ELDOA- developed as the result of over thirty years of research and successful application in thousands of cases by world-renown Osteopath and Medical Doctor, Guy Voyer whom I've had the privilege of studying with for over 8 years.

Before I describe what those are and how they are different from traditional stretching and yoga, the first thing to explore is *why do people stretch?* A good answer is, to loosen up their muscles. Another would be to increase their range of motion. These are all completely valid reasons, but if we start looking at the body differently, we will see that "everything is connected" and not just the muscular system but the skeletal, nervous, endocrine, lymphatic, and fascial systems. The key point here is that all these SYSTEMS connect to each other and form the whole sentient being that is YOU!

So how do these stretches help this entire system that is you? I'll first start with myofascial stretching. The purpose of myofascial stretching is to keep your body in balance (tensegrity). When your body is balanced, everything just functions and works better. The human body has over 600 muscles. Muscles are designed for movement by contracting (shortening) and relaxing (lengthening). It is this process of contraction and relaxation which enables us to manage our internal environment and move through our external environment. Conventional stretching techniques typically involve stretching a muscle in isolation. This approach, for the most part, is ineffective since it disregards the fact that muscles work in groups or chains. If muscles did not function this way, we would not have the ability to coordinate movement, i.e. to walk.

Since muscles work together in chains, it also follows that if one muscle within a chain has an imbalance, then it will adversely affect the functioning and length-tension relationships of other muscles within that chain. For example, there is no hamstring muscle. There are however THREE muscles that make up

the hamstring. So when stretching the hamstring, different biomechanical actions need to be addressed for each muscle or the stretch will be mostly ineffective and potentially harmful. In order to effectively stretch a muscle, you must stretch it along with the other muscles within the chain. This form of stretching is called Myofascial Stretching.

You may not be familiar with the Fascial System, however, it is important to understand this system in order to understand these stretches. The fascial system is the skin that connects and surrounds EVERYTHING. Fascia encases the muscles and it is also interwoven throughout the muscles. If that casing is tight and dry then the muscle will always go back to the original form of that casing. Because Myofascial Stretching is based on the exact biomechanics of the body along with the fascial connections, when you put your body in a correct posture/position your body has no choice but to respond.



Many people say “I do yoga to increase flexibility.” If you end up becoming more limber from yoga, this is great, however yoga is not based on science. It was created to prepare the body to be able to sit for long periods of time during meditation. Yoga is movement-based so your body will compensate to complete a movement just the same as it would compensate to lift something or to run for example. This is one of the reasons why you may have noticed a rise in injuries (especially in men because men are generally tighter and more likely to push through pain). The other reason for an increase in injury is because Yoga has become Americanized and in America *everything needs to be intense!*

Along with balancing our body through myofascial stretching, we also need space. Having the proper amount of space within our body allows everything to flow properly. This is where the ELDOA's come in. Our lifestyles and the fact that we are living longer adversely impact our spine and other joints. We are constantly being pushed down by gravity, and in our present modern lifestyle we are putting stresses throughout our body that are not the most beneficial. We do a lot of sitting while working on computers and consequently, our joints start to get compressed. This causes us to have less movement. If you are not actively supporting the health of your spine and other joints, it is just a matter of time before they succumb and become symptomatic (exhibits pain/loss of function) to these forces. No one is exempt from these forces!

ELDOAs (Etirements Longitudinaux avec Decoaptation Osteo- Articulaire) are exercises designed to improve and maintain good posture, spinal health and integrity. ELDOA is a series of decoaptative (give space) longitudinal stretching exercises targeting the spine – more specifically, the vertebral segments of the spine. A vertebral segment is composed of two bony vertebrae, the spongy disc between them and the tissues (muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves) that attach and directly influence the segment. The human spine has 23-24 vertebral segments. There is an ELDOA for each vertebral segment and most of the periphery joints (hips, shoulders, etc)

To understand how ELDOA works, we must first understand the mechanism behind its application. First of all, ELDOA'S ARE NOT STRETCHES. I realize that this fact and my putting them in this report is a little funny. But these exercises do work to give the joints and space in your body space as well as strengthen, mobilize, and make it “smarter.” For a joint to decoaptate (give space) while performing ELDOA, a specific posture is assumed. The posture directs self-induced tension to the myofascial chain influencing that particular joint. Maintaining both the posture and tension that ELDOA demands for a duration of at least 60 seconds will give both the nervous system (‘driver’) and body (‘car’) time to become aware and adjust. Over time and with repetition, the body moves towards a position of postural normalization and eased tensions. Regardless of a person's posture, the factors of progression make the ELDOAs user-friendly and extremely effective.

The key to ELDOA's success lies with the conscious integration of the body and nervous system. In order for the nervous system to reset the habitual postural positioning of the body, you must be consciously present (aware) during each ELDOA exercise. In essence, you are retraining the nervous system to adopt the new posture. I can personally attest to ELDOA's effectiveness from having had a compressed L4-L5 (the bottom of your lower back). By using a couple specific ELDOA's daily, my pain was relieved and quickly!

These are not magical exercises, and there are certain extreme conditions that will require medical intervention. But with just a little of your time and some work these techniques can produce amazing results.



For those of you who have aches and pains or have been dealing with musculoskeletal issues/imbalance, these amazing techniques ARE FOR YOU!

But it's not just for people who are trying to get out of pain and dysfunction, as with all the stretches and exercises we use in our holistic osteopathic program. You can use these same techniques to get stronger and more mobile, make your body smarter, and a body that can keep up with the life you want to live.

I have been using these osteopathic holistic techniques along with specific traditional strength training to produce some amazing results. I can so that I have a better body now than I did in my 20s after getting injured.

Note: These stretches need to be taught to you by a certified instructor! I have seen too many people try and duplicate them from watching me or seeing a picture/video of one of the stretches and then do it completely wrong. Or worse,

I have seen trainers try and copy them and give them to their clients, never knowing exactly how to perform the stretch or why they need or do not need it! These stretches have factors of progressing and need to be modified to each individual and incorporated into a program to get the full amazing benefits.

The fastest, most efficient, and safest way to have a body that can keep up with the life you want to live is to use a Holistic program with an experienced practitioner.

We have options of classes, privates (therapy and fitness), and a personalized online program. Schedule a complimentary diagnostic consultation to learn more about our program and see if it and any of our offerings are a good fit.

In this consultation, we'll go over the following:

- Where you are starting from now
- Where you want to go
- The obstacles that are preventing you from getting there.

This way, we'll get a broader view of the path that you need to take so that we can provide you with valuable information. And if we see that you are a good fit, we will offer you a spot in one of our programs. Use the link below to book. You'll be taken to Calendly and our calendar to choose a date and time.

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