

Global Active Stretching: a technique only for sportsmen?

O stretching global ativo: uma técnica apenas para esportistas?

Ana Letícia Cardoso Pinto¹ 
Biatriz Araújo Cardoso Dias² 
George Alberto da Silva Dias³ 

^{1,2}Universidade do Estado do Pará (Belém). Pará, Brazil. analeticia.pinto@gmail.com, biatrizac@yahoo.com.br

³Corresponding author. Universidade do Estado do Pará (Belém). Pará, Brazil. georgealbertodias@yahoo.com.br

When any activity is performed, the muscles are activated; consequently, the movements may have less amplitude, less ease, and thus less effectiveness. Moreover, to mitigate these effects of contraction, a work of flexibilization is necessary so that the global movement is facilitated thinking of reducing the risks of body imbalance in the long term.¹

In this context, the effects of muscle stretching have been known for some time, even those more traditional ones that used commuting movements. However, over time, the stretching season brought a new perspective, with a more logical approach to the conception of stretching, favoring a deeper knowledge that could then be introduced to the physical preparation and well-being of athletes.¹

Thus, flexibility is recognized as an indispensable motor quality for movement. In this context, it is important to elucidate the role of stretching to prepare for effort and recovery after it will also produce relaxation effects. Thus, relaxation and well-being are interesting for both athletes and anyone else who practices it.²

In this sense, the Global Active Stretching (SGA) was developed by Philippe Souchard in 1995 directed to sports practice. The method has five principles: muscles exist in chains; each muscle has several physiologies; the stretching of the muscles obeys the same physical formula as the viscous and elastic materials; the elongations of this method are always active, and breathing is fundamental.¹

For the use of this method, stretching is performed slowly and progressively, adopting the postures recommended by global postural reeducation (GPR) combined with breathing. This stretching is done in groups of people through self-postures (without the therapist's help) that are chosen through a careful evaluation related to the athlete's need and based on his/her sporting gesture.³⁻⁵ Therefore, because it is such a relevant method, can only athletes benefit? Although this technique was created to be used with athletes, it is believed that other non-sportsmen could also benefit from the effects of SGA. The important thing is to know how to understand the movement within the social context leading to dysfunction.

According to some authors⁴, they point out that it is currently also used to prevent injuries from repetitive activities in work practice.

The SGA may present some effects such as improvement of muscle performance, reduction of injuries, promotes strengthening of the overall musculature, corrects posture, improves elasticity, softens pain, and promotes a good body condition, which in general is very important for athletes.^{1,3} However, how should I use the SGA in other audiences? That is an important question because it is up to the Physiotherapist to know how to use the SGA to the demand of their patients. Therefore, another relevant point is to conduct more robust research to explore and understand the method's effectiveness.

Because it is a method that has not been scientifically explored to prove its real benefits^{5,6}, what is known of it? It is known that the SGA can be efficient to improve the athlete's performance, increasing flexibility, and understand the biomechanics of his gesture in sport. However, it cannot be affirmed that global active stretching allows avoiding muscle and joint injuries during sports practice. However, it can reduce its risks because other factors are involved in this injury process, such as stress, psychological balance, genetic predispositions, and others, which can be treated using other techniques.^{1,6,7}

Among the published articles, there is evidence in studies involving fighting sports, and there was an improvement in some variables such as injury prevention in the period before and after a championship⁸, the effects on the performance of fighters⁵, and the return of thermographic asymmetry.⁶

Regarding court sports, which are seeking better performance in their position on the field, a study shows that in handball athletes⁴, there was an improvement in speed and agility tests in addition to physical performance. Regarding flexibility, handball⁴, futsal⁷ and volleyball² also demonstrated an improvement in range of motion, collaborating with the prevention of injuries and better sports performance that the sport requires.

Stretching also contributes to improving body posture that is often compensated and/or uses accessory muscles. For example, in a study with badminton athletes³ and physical education school students⁹,

this variable improved. Another study conducted with pregnant women to evaluate the effects of SGA on low back and pelvic pain¹⁰ found relief or decrease in discomfort in the lumbar and pelvic region of these women.

Therefore, to better understand the real effects of SGA, studies with scientific rigor need to be carried out. Studies mentioned above show the importance of working the muscle chain actively because, when stretching with muscle groups is practiced within a specific activity, muscle mechanics is facilitated, and there is an improvement in the sports gesture. Thus, given the effects that the SGA promotes, it is up to the Physiotherapist to know how to employ individuals who are not athletes. Faced with a good evaluation and clinical indication, any individual could benefit from the SGA.

Author contributions

Pinto ALC participated in the literature review and writing. Dias BAC participated in the writing and critical review of the editorial. Dias GAS participated in the drafting and final approval of the version to be published.

Competing interests

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