

CALF STRETCHES

Gastroc Stretch: This push-off exercise is the one you most often see runners doing before races. Typically, they lean against a wall to stretch the calf muscles—but they don't always do it right, claims Pitchford. The gastroc muscle, along with the soleus, is located in the back of the calf. It is the calf muscle that actually propels your leg across your grounded foot while running. Lean against a wall or other stationary object, both palms against the object. The leg you want to stretch is back, several feet from the wall, your heel firmly positioned on the floor. Your other leg is flexed about halfway between your back leg and the wall. Start with your back straight and gradually lunge forward until you feel the stretch in your calf. "It is important to keep your back foot straight and angled 90 degrees from the wall," says Pitchford.

Gastroc Stretch Position



Soleus Stretch: "This is the stretch that most runners forget," says Pitchford. "They stretch their gastroc muscles (as above) without realizing there's a similar stretch for the soleus." The soleus is the other major muscle in the calf, located in front of the gastroc. It is important for planting the foot on the ground before your push off. Position yourself similar to the gastroc stretch with back straight and palms against the wall. The difference is that you start in a "seated" position with your legs bent, your buttocks dropped. Gently lean into the wall until you feel the stretch in your lower calf.

Soleus Stretch Position

