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VITAL SIGNS
Exercise: Warm-Ups Help Surgeons Keep Limber

By ERIC NAGOURNEY
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A new study suggests that surgeons may want to take a page from athletes and musicians and warm up before they go to work.

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The researchers found that when surgeons took part in a series of exercises before operating, they performed better in surgery simulations.

"Dancers, musicians, sculptors and painters have, for centuries, used short-term practice or warm-up as a method for getting ready for the task at hand," the researchers note in [an article in the February issue of The Journal of the American College of Surgeons](#). The lead author is Kanav Kahol of [Arizona State University](#).

For the study, 46 surgeons of varying degrees of experience were asked to spend 15 to 20 minutes doing warm-up exercises that simulated minimally invasive surgery. That technique, which is increasingly popular, offers many benefits for patients. But for surgeons, the study says, it can mean using hard-to-handle tools within tight confines.

The researchers were looking for something more than just flexibility. Warming up, they said, appears not only to make surgeons more limber but also to provide "cognitive arousal."

The study found that the exercises were useful for surgeons starting a new day and for those fatigued from being on call. They also found that the improvement seemed to carry over to surgical tasks different from those used in the warm-up.

There is some question about whether the improvements associated with the exercises can be duplicated in an operating room.

A version of this article appeared in print on February 17, 2009, on page D6 of the New York edition. [More Articles in Health »](#)

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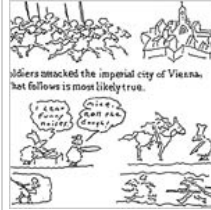
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