Major Stretches for After a Run

May and June are big months for running races, especially with the not-too-hot-but-not-too-cold weather! Because jogging is so convenient to fit into our daily routines, we sometimes forget to stretch. Here are the basics for the major muscle groups of the leg!

**Step stretch**
**Target areas:** hip joint, quadriceps

Step forward and flex your forward knee, keeping your knee directly above your ankle. Stretch your other leg back so that it's parallel to the floor. Press your hip forward and down to stretch—the way you angle your torso can stretch different muscles!

**Alternate Leg Stretcher**
**Target areas:** hamstring, hip joint, knee, ankle, butt

Lie flat on your back with both legs straight.

1. Grasp your left leg behind the thigh, and pull in to your chest.
2. Hold this position, and then extend your left leg toward the ceiling.
3. Hold this position, and then bring your left knee back to your chest and pull your toes toward your shin with your left hand. Stretch the back of the leg by trying to straighten your knee. Repeat for the other leg.

**Variation:** Do the whole thing with both legs at the same time!

**Calf Stretch**
**Target areas:** gastrocnemius and soleus muscles, Achilles tendon

Stand with one foot about 30-50 cm in front of the other, with both feet pointing forward.

1. Keeping your back leg straight, lunge forward by bending your front knee and pushing your rear heel backward. Hold.
2. Then pull your back foot in slightly, and bend your back knee. Shift your weight to your back leg. Hold. Repeat on the other side.

**Variation:** place your hands on a wall and extend one foot back, pressing your heel down to stretch. I find that this helps keep your focus on stretching properly and off keeping yourself balanced!

Images from top to bottom: http://www.joemartinfitness.com/tag/hip-flexor-stretch/
http://www.ericavijay.net/resources/erica-pt/
http://www.weightlossforall.com/stretches-lower-body.htm
https://gymnasticsinjuries.wordpress.com/2012/10/12/beginning-therapeutic-exercise-for-inversion-ankle-sprains/