

Everyday Stretches

Note: If you have had any recent surgery, muscle or joint problem, please consult your personal health care professional before starting a stretching or exercise program.

Stretching can be done before and after activity or whenever you feel like it.

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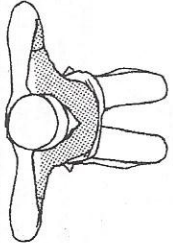
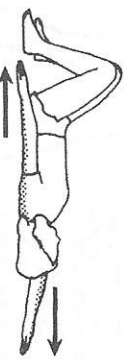
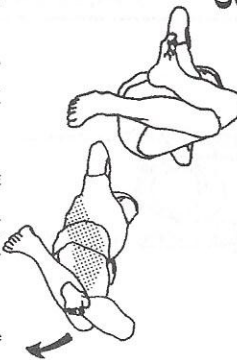

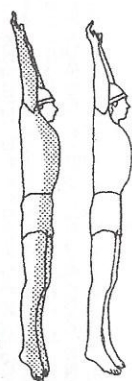
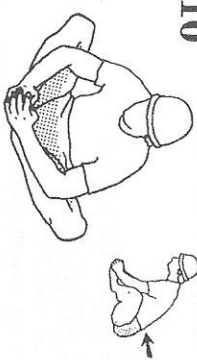

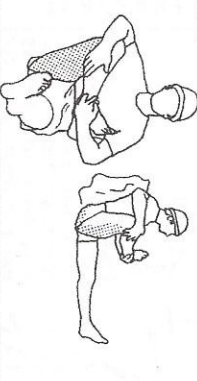
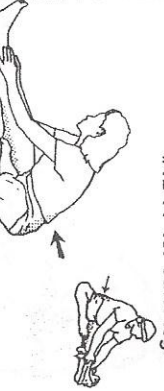
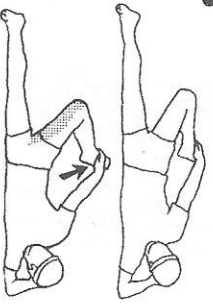
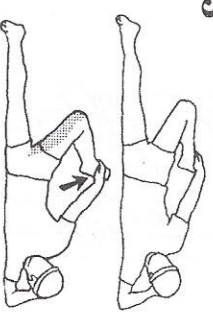
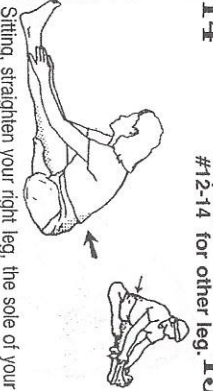
How to Stretch:

Stretching should be done slowly without bouncing. Stretch to where you feel a slight, easy stretch. Hold this feeling for 5-20 seconds. As you hold this stretch, the feeling of tension should diminish. If it doesn't, just ease off slightly into a more comfortable stretch. The easy stretch reduces tension and readies the tissues for the developmental stretch.

After holding the easy stretch move a fraction of an inch farther into the stretch until you feel mild tension again. This is the developmental stretch which should be held for 5-20 seconds. This feeling of stretch tension should also slightly diminish or stay the same. If the

tension increases or becomes painful, you are over-stretching. Ease off a bit to a comfortable stretch. The developmental stretch reduces tension and will safely increase flexibility. Hold only stretch tensions that feel good to you. The key to stretching is to be relaxed while you concentrate on the area being stretched. Your breathing should be slow, deep and rhythmic. Don't worry about how far you can stretch. Stretch relaxed and limberness will become just one of the many by-products of regular stretching. Do a light warm-up of walking or jogging for several minutes prior to stretching.

The dotted areas are those areas of the body where you will most likely feel the stretch.

<p>1</p> 	<p>Relax with your knees bent and the soles of your feet together. This comfortable position will stretch your groin. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds. For comfort, place a small pillow under your neck and head.</p>	<p>2</p> 	<p>Interlace your fingers behind your head and rest your arms on the floor. Using the power of your arms, slowly bring your head and shoulders forward until you feel a slight stretch in the neck and upper back area. Think of elbows going toward mid-thighs. Hold an easy stretch for 5 seconds. Repeat three times. Do not over-stretch.</p>	<p>3</p>  <p>Shoulder Blade Pinch: From the bent-knee position pull your shoulder blades together to create tension in the upper back area. (As you do this your chest should move upward.) Hold this contracted tension for 4-5 seconds, then relax and gently pull your head forward as shown in stretch #2. This will help release tension and allow the neck to be stretched effectively. Think of creating tension, relaxing the same area, then stretching the back of the neck to help keep the muscles of the neck free to move without tightness. Repeat 3-4 times.</p>
<p>4</p> 	<p>With your head resting on the floor or mat, put one arm above your head (palm up), and the other arm down along your side (palm down). Reach in opposite directions at the same time to create a stretch for 8-10 seconds. Do both sides at least twice. Keep your lower back relaxed and flat. Do not hold your breath.</p>	<p>5</p> 	<p>6</p> 	<p>8</p> <p>Repeat stretch #1</p>  <p>Repeat stretch #1 9</p>
<p>10</p> 	<p>From a bent knee position, interlace your fingers behind your head and lift the left leg over the right leg. From here, use your left leg to pull your right leg toward the floor until you feel a good stretch. Stretch and relax. Keep the upper back, shoulders, and elbows flat on the floor. The idea is not to touch the floor with your right knee, but to stretch within your limits. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Repeat stretch for other side.</p>	<p>11</p> 	<p>12</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>Repeat stretches #12-14 for other leg. #15</p> 
<p>13</p> 	<p>Put the soles of your feet together with your heels a comfortable distance from your groin. With your hands around your feet slowly contract your abdominals to assist you in flexing forward until you feel an easy stretch in the groin. Make your movement forward by bending from the hips and not from the shoulders. If possible, keep your elbows on the outside of your lower legs for greater stability during the stretch. Hold a comfortable stretch for 20-30 seconds.</p>	<p>14</p> 	<p>15</p> 	<p>Sitting, straighten your right leg, the sole of your left foot resting next to the inside of your straightened leg. Lean slightly forward from the hips and stretch the hamstrings of your right leg. Find an easy stretch and relax. If you can't touch your toes comfortably, use a towel to help you stretch. Hold for 20 seconds. Do not lock your knee. Your right quadriceps should be soft and relaxed during the stretch. Keep your right foot upright with the ankle and toes relaxed. Breathe relaxed.</p>