

Why Stretching is important

We don't need to be able to do back bends and headstand poses to benefit from the flexibility that a good stretching program brings. As our bodies age, our joints stiffen and we can gradually lose range of motion without even noticing it.

Our bodies (and minds) are designed to instinctively adapt and make the best of any situation to avoid discomfort, so it's surprisingly common how certain everyday actions or movements that may cause stiffness simply stop happening.

Can't reach overhead for what you need? Oh well, just move it down lower! And guess what happens next? You lose or significantly decrease your ability to reach overhead, and range of motion in your shoulders is dramatically reduced.

What started as a temporary pain became established as a permanent habit.

When muscles get tight and stay tight, they lose their elasticity and restrict movement. That sense of stiffness can cause you to restrict certain movements, which in turn creates more stiffness. This can set up a vicious cycle that establishes more and more constraint in movement impacting your day-to-day activities and actively impairing your fitness and wellbeing.

Only movement and regular stretching will make your joints release lubricating fluid to "grease your groove". Leaving your muscles to tighten and stiffen only leads to a higher likelihood of injury. Not what we want at all!

You wouldn't be looking at this program if functional movement weren't important to you. We all want to be able to live our lives with ease of movement and freedom of pain – and enjoy our daily activities of choice.

You may have heard that you should never stretch a "cold" muscle and that you should warm up before you stretch. So what happens, if you feel too stiff and sore to actually get out and walk or do warm-up movements?

We have some great ideas for easy stretching to get you moving at any time of day or night. These don't require a warm-up and can be done anywhere. Try and work at least 10 minutes of stretching into your schedule 3 times a week for lasting benefits.

FEMALE FAT LOSS OVER 40

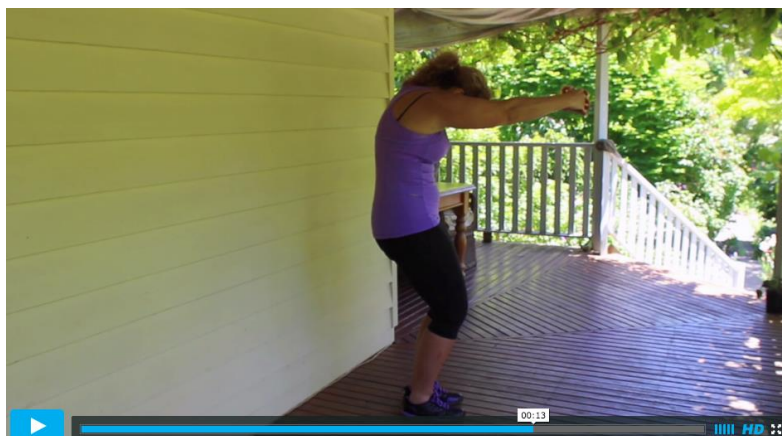
Stretching for Lower Back and Spine Stiffness



Childs Pose can be modified to lying on your side if your knees don't like the constraint of this position. Cobra can be done lying on your bed if you're uncomfortable getting down on the floor. And Cat Stretch can easily be done with hands on a low bench.

Breathe in to move between stretches. Breathe out to relax into the stretch. Alternate between these stretches for about 3 minutes to "ease out the kinks". Can be done whenever you need, as often as you need.

Stretching for Upper Back Stiffness



Tuck chin gently to chest, round upper back and linking fingers in front of you, reach your arms as far forward as you can. Inhale to begin the stretch and exhale to reach and hold. Relax and roll your shoulders in between each stretch.

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Spinal Mobility



Stand easily with feet slightly apart and shoulders drawn back and down, chest lifted. Keep your knees slightly bent to relieve tension in your lower back. Tuck chin gently to chest and without reaching through your arms or hands, slowly fold forward to feel a stretch from your neck down to your tailbone. Only go as low as you feel comfortable and avoid any pain. Take a deep breath at the bottom of the movement and bracing abdominals slowly unfold, consciously stacking your spine up a little straighter and taller. Come back to your starting position of proud chest, shoulders back and eyes looking forward. Continue this flow of movement up to 10 times or as required. Continue to breathe naturally throughout the movement.

Leg Swings



Stand alongside a stable chair or countertop at easy waist height and resting one hand lightly on it for support, swing one leg to and fro as far forward as you can comfortably reach without effort and as far back as you can without tipping forward. Feel the front of your hip open as you swing the leg back. Repeat up to 10 times per side. Do this as often as you need to assist in releasing tight hips or groin pain.

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Chest Stretching



If you spend a lot of time sitting or bending forward then you'll probably have very tight chest muscles. You may feel this as sore shoulders but try stretching your chest first to give your back muscles a break.

You can stand in a doorway and gently press your hands into the door surround and lean your body forward between your hands till you feel a stretch through your chest and the front of your arms and shoulders. Hold this stretch for around 10 seconds, release and repeat several times. To stretch all chest fibres, alter the position of the hands – first higher, then slightly lower, then lower again as pictured.

Alternatively, do a chest stretch at any time in your chair by gripping the seat of the chair behind your hips and lower your body forward until you feel a corresponding stretch across the front of your arms and shoulders. Relax and breathe into the stretch. Repeat up to 5 times as often as is needed.

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Tight Neck Muscles



Sit in your best posture with shoulders back and down and chest open. Gently drop your head towards your left shoulder and feel a stretch in the right side of your neck. Exhale to relax for up 10 seconds and then rotate the head so you're looking over your left shoulder for a strong stretch in the neck and throat muscles. Repeat on the other side.

Any stretches affecting your neck need to be done very gently and very slowly. You can repeat these as often as you need.