

:: Stretching ::

Stretching comes naturally to us all. If we have been sitting in a particular position for a long time, we stretch unconsciously. It feels good. Proper stretching:

- Reduces muscle tension and makes the whole body feel supple.
- Prevents injuries.
- Helps to prepare for activity, such as lifting or moving materials, running, swimming, etc.
- Increases the temperature of the muscles, which optimizes their performance.
- Increases the circulation of the blood to various parts of the body.
- Enhances muscular coordination.

Stretching exercises are simple; however, if you now have, or have had, physical problems that make stretching painful, check with your doctor before beginning a stretching program. A good stretch needs to be held for 20-30 seconds for each muscle group. Do the stretches without any bouncy movements. During the stretch program, keep breathing rhythmic, slow and under control. For example, if you are doing forward bends, inhale while coming forward, breathe slowly during the stretch and exhale while coming up. Do not hold your breath during stretch exercises.

Neck roll

1. Drop your chin to your chest. Stay in this position and feel the stretch in the back of your neck.
2. Roll your head to the right. Stay in this position and feel the stretch on the left side.
3. Roll your head to the front again. Now, roll your head to the left. Stay in this position and feel the stretch on the right side.
4. Do not roll your head backward! You could crush the vertebrae at the top of your spinal column.

Shoulder roll

1. With your arms relaxed at your sides, rotate your right shoulder backward in a circular motion. Be sure to complete the circle while keeping your arm straight at your side.
2. Repeat this four times.
3. Repeat the exercise with the left shoulder.
4. Rotate both shoulders at the same time.
5. Repeat three to five times.

Shoulder reach

1. Hold your arms straight in front of you with palms facing each other.
2. Interlace your fingers and rotate your palms so they face away from your body.
3. Extend your arms forward until you feel a stretch in your shoulders and arms.

4. Stay in this position for a few seconds then relax.
5. Repeat this 10 times.

Wrist roll

1. Make a loose fist with your right hand.
2. Holding your arm still, slowly rotate your hand in a circular motion at the wrist.
3. Repeat this 10 times in each direction.
4. Repeat the exercise with your left hand.

Shoulder stretch

1. Stand with your feet slightly apart.
2. Raise your right arm in front of you.
3. Bending at the elbow, bring your right arm across your chest at shoulder level until you feel a slight pull in your shoulder.
4. Gently apply pressure with your left hand at your right elbow.
5. Stay in this position for a few seconds then relax.
6. Repeat this 10 times.
7. Repeat the exercise with your left arm.

Chest stretch

1. Stand tall, feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart, knees relaxed and slightly bent.
2. Hold your arms out to the side, parallel with the ground and the palms of the hand facing forward.
3. Stretch the arms back as far as possible. You should feel the stretch across your chest.

Side bend

1. Stand with your feet apart, with knees slightly bent.
2. Raise your right hand over your head and place your left hand on your left hip.
3. Lean to the left, bending slightly at the waist. Stop as soon as you feel a slight stretch in your right side.
4. Stay in this position for a few seconds and then slowly return to the standing position.
5. Repeat this five to 10 times.
6. Repeat the exercise five to 10 times to the right side.

Back bend

1. Stand with your feet slightly apart and knees slightly bent.
2. Place your hands on your hips.
3. Lean backward slightly. Be sure not to lean too far back!
4. Stay in this position for a few seconds then relax.
5. Repeat this 10 times.

