

Type of Exercise:
Stretching

Level: Easy

Equipment Needed: mat and or towel, chair

This stretching routine goes well with all physical activity routines. In fact, flexibility is one of the four measures of fitness (the others being endurance, strength and balance). Stretching keeps your muscles and body flexible, can prevent injury, and is an active way to relax and relieve stress. Find a convenient time and location, schedule it into your daily calendar, and stretch! Work on being consistent with your training and include stretching in each exercise session.

General instructions for all stretching routines: Stretch before exercising if you are particularly stiff or tight; warming up should be a part of every exercise session. Don't ask your body to go to "full on" effort right away! Stretching after exercising is a must. It is really easy to skip stretching – fight the urge to do so. Stretches shouldn't be painful. If you're feeling pain, back off a little. You should feel a gentle pull, sometimes you can actually feel the muscle lengthening. Hold stretches for 20 to 60 seconds. Use a watch or clock, most people dramatically underestimate how long 20 to 60 seconds takes! Don't bounce! Be gentle and purposeful in the way you engage in stretching, go easily into and out of the stretch. Do each stretch 2 or 3 times. And of course, continue breathing! In fact, as your stretching expertise increases, you can actually "breathe" into stretches to help your muscles relax.

Specific Stretches:

Lat Stretch:

- Stand upright, hold both arms in the air
- Pull left arm with your right hand to the ceiling and side

Pectoralis Stretch:

- Place elbow in line with shoulder against wall or door frame (facing object used for stretching)
- Step a little bit forward until you feel a stretch in your chest muscle

Neck Stretch:

- Stand tall
- Reach your right hand over your head to your left ear and pull head to your right shoulder
- Relax left shoulder (let hang low)

Lower Back-Stretch:

- Sit on the edge of a chair, knees more than hip-width apart
- Extend upper body forward, keeping your back straight
- Let upper body and arms hang down between your legs

Hip Flexor-Stretch:

- Start in a lunge position (backward knee rests on floor)
- Push hip forward and down

Gluteus Stretch:

- Lay on your back
- Grab ankle and knee and pull lower leg towards your chest
- Be careful if you have knee problems!

Hamstring Stretch:

- Sit on the edge of a chair
- 1 leg extended, the other one relaxed/flexed
- Extend upper body forward, with a straight back towards your extended leg

Quads Stretch:

- Lay on your side
- The bottom leg is bent 90° at the knee and hip
- Bring heel of top leg towards your butt
- “push knee back – hip forward”

Calf Stretch 1:

- Begin facing a wall, take a medium step back, both feet point towards the wall
- Lean with hands against the wall
- Push knee of front leg towards the floor as back leg extends
- Heel should stay in contact with floor

Calf Stretch 2:

- Begin facing a wall, take a medium step back, both feet point towards the wall
- Lean with hands against the wall
- Back leg is extended
- Bring hip closer towards the wall

Forearm Stretch:

- Begin on all 4s (hands under shoulders and knees under hips)
- Arms are externally rotated so fingers point towards your knees
- Slowly move your bodyweight towards your heels

Spinal Twist-Stretch:

- Lay on your back
- Right arm 135° to the side (a little bit away from your ear)
- Left hand pulls right knee (leg flexed) to the left
- Look towards your right hand

Please use common sense! You can hurt yourself stretching! Our downloadable routines are designed for average people with no underlying health issues. If you're feeling poorly when exercising – stop and figure out what's going on with your body. If you've got health issues that might be impacted by this routine, please visit your doctor before starting this program.

	Explanation of Goals and Exercise Routines	Estimated Time	Check if completed ✓
Week 1	Let's get started! Stretching is great for your body and mind. Breathe deeply and slowly ease yourself into each stretch. Allow your mind to be calm while stretching. Be conscious of movements while stretching. While stretching you will feel muscular tension, which is not the same as pain! Stretch to a point of tension without pain.	45 Minutes	
Day 1	Perform the exercises as slowly as is comfortable for you. While stretching, think of lengthening your body. Focus on using good form throughout all exercises. Lat Neck Hamstrings Calf 1 Spinal-Twist	15 Minutes	
Day 2	Be aware of your breathing while you stretch. Inhale deeply, take a short pause and then exhale slowly. Your breathing should be natural instead of forced.	15 Minutes	

	Pectoralis Lower-Back Quads Calf 2 Forearm		
Day 3	Pectoralis Hip-Flexor Gluteaus Hamstrings Lower-Back	15 Minutes	
Week 2	Although our lives are very busy, taking time to consciously relax really does wonders. A little stretching break from your daily tasks is welcome. Take advantage of this time and opportunity to breathe. Deep, slow, breathing throughout all stretches will calm you and even aid in flexibility!	55 Minutes	
Day 1	Stretch with a family member	20 Minutes	
Day 2	Stretch while listening to some relaxing music	20 Minutes	
Day 3	Focus on stretching your tightest muscle group. Work on breathing and relaxing into the stretch.	15 Minutes	

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