

STRETCH YOUR WAY TO A PAIN-FREE LIFE

Illustrated Stretches for Sports, Medical Conditions,
and Specific Muscle Groups

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INTRODUCTION

There's no magic trick to reverse aging, but there *is* a technique so effective that it can make you feel like you've just taken years off your age. Or, more specifically, in the case of my 85-year old client, taken 60 years off your age! That's exactly what happened after my client was introduced to a stretching program for the first time in his life. He completed his first series of stretches, looked at me incredulously, and said, "I feel like I am in my 20s again!"

Now, that's not going to be everyone's experience, and I realize that stretching isn't a cure-all, but a proper stretching program, executed correctly, can be life-changing. I've worked with all kinds of people over my 20-year career, and my favorite words to hear are, "I don't hurt anymore!" With a regular stretching program, you, too, can eliminate or greatly reduce pain.

After my college career was over, I moved to drier pastures down in Scottsdale, Arizona. I became a flexibility specialist and had the opportunity to work with some of the greatest names in sport and entertainment history. As you can imagine, Alamosa, Colorado didn't have many famous people living there (more like *zero*), so I had to try very hard not to be completely in awe of these people while working with them. I worked for 8-12 hours a day, stretching people, learning how the human body moves, and more importantly, learning about all the issues people deal with on a daily basis due to a lack of mobility. I have been able to work with all types, from professional athletes to couch potatoes, ages 12 years old to 90 years young, and weekend warriors to individuals afflicted with Parkinson's disease or joint replacements. However, the greatest thing of all through my near 20 years of work is that I have witnessed time and time again the benefits of a regular stretching program.

Although stretching has become more prevalent, people still don't have a good handle on how to stretch. My goal with this book is to continue what I have been able to do in the last 20 years, and that is to help people from all walks of life feel and move better. No matter your age or athletic ability, this book will give you the basic knowledge of how stretching works, the benefits of stretching, different types of stretching techniques, and even specific foods you can eat that can help you attain your goals. The hundreds of stretches that this book contains will give you many choices so that you never get bored and give up on improving your wellbeing. Toward the end of this book, I have provided my favorite daily stretching routines, stretching routines that can assist you with specific ailments, and sport-specific routines.

I truly hope that with the assistance of this book, you will make stretching a daily habit.

BENEFITS OF STRETCHING

In recent years, many people have discovered the benefits of stretching through techniques like yoga and Pilates. But stretching has had a long history of benefiting athletes by helping them reach their optimum performance. For years, we've witnessed athletes getting stretched by a coach or a trainer before an important sporting event. While it might escape you at first glance, there is a profound advantage to stretching and improving your overall body movement. I like to think that better movement is the building block to complete fitness and an individual's overall wellbeing—no matter your age or athletic ability. By staying consistent with a stretching program, you can benefit in the following ways:

Better Range of Motion: Range of motion refers to the amount of movement we have in our joints. As a muscle shortens and becomes stiff, it creates tension not just in the muscle, but also in the tendons and ligaments. As our connective tissues tighten, they place more tension on our joints, which can cause less range of motion as well as additional friction and rubbing within the joint.

Better Blood and Oxygen Circulation: Vasoconstriction is a term used to describe the narrowing of a blood vessel due to the tightening of the surrounding muscle). ¹When a person stretches properly and allows the muscle to relax, the muscle can release the proverbial chokehold it has on the blood vessels, allowing for better circulation of blood and oxygen. Poor circulation can cause pain and cramp in your muscles, as well as tingling in your hands and feet. As our red blood cells collect the oxygen, it is carried off throughout our body to our body's tissue. Oxygen can then help to counteract the buildup of lactic acid in the muscle, which can lead to faster recovery.

Less Arthritic Pain: Arthritis is inflammation of your joints, which causes stiffness and pain. When a joint becomes stiff, it creates more friction on your cartilage, ultimately causing it to break down. In severe cases, it breaks down the cartilage completely, causing bone-on-bone rubbing in your joint. Due to the pain, people tend to limit their movement, which creates tighter muscles, and produces more tension and pain in the joint. Instead, we should focus on some light, easy stretches, so your muscles can relax enough to take some of that tension off your joints.

Reduced Stress and Anxiety: We are living in a fast-paced world, constantly working, trying to get ahead, and taking care of the needs of our loved ones, all of which can be a recipe for building stress and anxiety. Stress and anxiety can raise your heart rate and produce tension in the muscles, which creates tightness. Taking 20-30 minutes off per day to stretch and focus on your needs allows you to slow down, breathe, and relax. As your heart rate lowers and you increase your circulation, you can relieve the tension in your muscles.

Fewer Aches and Pains: One of the biggest causes of all of our little aches and pains is being sedentary. We sit at work at our desks all day (which tightens the muscles in our body), and then we go home and rest our aches and pains again by sitting or lying down on the couch. Our body

¹ Cunningham, 1108

was made to move! Stretching can take away most of the pressure that has been placed on our muscles, joints, tendons, and ligaments from sitting and allows our body to move more freely.

Improved Posture: I would like to share a little story about this benefit. For as long as I have been working with individuals on their stretching and body movement, my clients have had a common question.

“Will I get taller?”

After hearing this question nearly every week, I started to think that it was a possibility, so I began measuring everybody before and after I stretched them. Funny enough, I found that 100% of my clients were indeed taller after I worked with them. Of course, just like anything else, they didn't believe me. So, I decided that I was going to prove it to them by taking a picture of them before and after I stretched them standing in front of a postural analysis grid chart. Now I had visual proof of them growing in some cases an inch in only a 30- or 60-minute session.

Now, obviously, we aren't elongating the skeletal structure of the human body and making them taller by stretching. As our muscles get tighter, our body wants to pull down and forward, causing our shoulders to round forward and our body to sink toward the ground. What we are doing through stretching is elongating all those muscles that place pressure on all of our joints, which, again, causes less spacing in our joints and creates friction. In essence, we are allowing more room in the joint, which elongates and straightens our body.

The pictures below show an individual before and after successively getting stretched. Also, make sure to notice that the cane is in the picture before getting stretched, but not in the picture after getting stretched!



Better Mental Focus: As we stretch, or do any kind of exercise, for that matter, our brain releases endorphins. Produced in the pituitary gland and the hypothalamus, endorphins are the body's natural feel-good chemical. It can help to alleviate pain, lessen depression, and boost your mental focus.

Less Sciatic Pain: The sciatic nerve is the longest nerve in the human body, starting in the lower back and extending all the way down into the foot. Though many problems can be associated with pressure on the nerve in the lower back, which may be caused by a disc problem, sciatic issues can also be associated with tension within the muscles. Stretching the muscles within the buttocks, primarily the piriformis, which overlaps the sciatic nerve, can help to alleviate sciatic nerve pain.

Reduced Chance of Injury and Enhanced Performance: I wanted to put these two together because I believe they work hand in hand. I think that we can all agree that a flexible body moves more freely and has fewer restrictions. Whether you are just trying to get up out of your chair, squatting down to pick up a dumbbell, or trying to hit a 300-yard drive, your flexibility plays a key role in how well these tasks are executed.

As we have discussed previously, the tighter our muscles are, the less range of motion we have in our bodies. Watch people as they walk, get out of a chair, or bend over to pick something up off the ground. If you watch closely, you will start to see people walking bent over at the waist or with their feet pointed out; you will see people using anything they can to help themselves out of a chair, and you will see all kinds of ways people try to get down toward the floor.

FACTORS AFFECTING FLEXIBILITY

Over the course of my career, I have learned that we are not created equal physically. Some people can stretch every day of their life and not have as much flexibility as someone who seldom stretches. As we get older, we start to see and feel changes within our body and how it works, or worse yet, how it doesn't work! The following factors can give us some insight into these differences.

Age: The importance of staying active and stretching becomes greater as we get older. As we age, our muscles tend to thicken and become more fibrous, making it more difficult for us to move freely. As our metabolism slows, our muscles begin to atrophy as we become less active and start to gain weight. Sarcopenia is a term used to describe the loss of skeletal muscle due to age. According to Crowther, "As the body ages, muscle bulk and strength decline slowly, beginning as early as age 50, with loss of about 1% per year thereafter."² On top of it all, we tend to change the way we eat, and we also start drinking less water. This is all a recipe for disaster for not only our flexibility, but how our body feels in general.

Gender: Sorry men, women tend to be more flexible than we are. Men typically have more muscle mass than women. Women also have a shallower pelvis, which in turn allows for better movement in the hips. On top of this, women produce hormones (i.e., estrogen) that tend to loosen connective tissue in the body.

Connective Tissue: We have two primary types of connective tissue that can negatively or positively affect an individual's movement and flexibility. The first of these is collagenous tissue, which is composed primarily of fibrous proteins called collagen. Found primarily in the tendons, ligaments, and skin, collagenous tissue helps to provide strength and support in our body. However, it is not very flexible, and that can limit our range of motion.

The other type of connective tissue is elastic tissue, which is composed primarily of a different kind of protein fiber called elastin. The amount of elastic tissue is really what determines our range of motion. The more we have, the more we can move.

Genetics: We see it every day we watch professional sports. Athletes at the highest level were born physically gifted. Don't get me wrong, they also worked very hard to get to that level, but how is it that a 6'5" man who weighs 350 pounds can be so strong, do splits, and touch his chest on the floor (I have seen it)? When we are born, our connective tissue (i.e., muscles, tendons, and ligaments) can not only differ in elasticity but also in length. These differences can cause a person's tightness.

² p. 1536

Joint Structure: As we have discussed previously, an individuals' flexibility and range of motion are directly related to the joints and the connective tissue surrounding them. We have three different classifications of joints:

- **Synovial Joints:** The most common joint in the body, including the knee, hip, wrist, elbow, and shoulder. Each synovial joint is surrounded by a capsule that seals and provides lubrication and stability to the joint. These joints also have more range of motion than our other joints.
- **Cartilaginous Joints:** This joint binds bones together through bands of cartilage, providing a limited range of motion. The intervertebral discs of the spine and the sternocostal joint in the ribs are two examples ³
- **Fibrous Joints:** Having no joint cavity, fibrous joints are connected by fibrous connective tissue and have no movement. An example of a fibrous joint would be the sutures of the skull bones.

Injuries: Every year as a sports fan, you hear about it, pulled hamstrings, torn pectoral muscles, injuries to the shoulders and back, and the list goes on. As sports fans, we get upset when our favorite players get hurt and can't play, and many times, we get even more upset when they don't come back when we think they should. We need to remember that any time we have an injury, not only do we need to allow it to heal, but then we need to rehab the injury. Whether it is in the muscle, joint, or bone, we start to develop scar tissue. Scar tissue is a more dense and fibrous tissue that protects the injury but doesn't allow it to move very freely. Injuries to a muscle, or any other connective tissue, can result in fibrosis (the development of scar tissue or thickening of the tissue to heal). On the positive side, the injured area is healed and feels better, but on the negative side, it also feels tighter and doesn't move as easily.

Diet: At this point in our lives, we should all understand that eating right and putting healthy food in our bodies is essential for our overall wellbeing. Eating healthy foods helps to cleanse our bodies of waste that can become toxic. In this section, I just want to touch briefly on several items that can truly help us gain more benefits in our stretching program.

Vitamin D: Vitamin D is essential for the absorption of calcium. Without the appropriate levels of this vitamin, only 10-15% of calcium and 60% of phosphorus can be absorbed. A vitamin D deficiency can precipitate a decrease in bone mineral density (osteopenia), softening of the bones (osteomalacia), decrease in bone strength (osteoporosis), as well as muscle weakness, which can cause more falls, greatly increasing the risk of fractures and other injuries.

³ Crowther p.1520

We can get a considerable amount of vitamin D from the sun; however, using sunscreen reduces its absorption into the body by as much as 99%.⁴ This is why we truly need to have a plan for what we eat daily. Foods that are higher in vitamin D are:

Salmon Portobellos Almondmilk Tofu

**Food lists taken from [My Food Data](#).

Vitamin C: Vitamin C is essential in the formation and maintenance of collagen. Collagen is the primary structural protein that is needed for the growth and repair of bone, skin, and connective tissue (tendons, ligaments, muscles, blood vessels). A vitamin C deficiency can slow your metabolism, making your body more fatigued.

Found in fruits and vegetables, vitamin C is best eaten in its raw form as cooking destroys most of the vitamin.⁵ Foods high in vitamin C are:

Peppers Kale Mango Oranges

Vitamin B: B vitamins contribute to the metabolism of protein and are also responsible for the production of energy in our body. A lack of specific B vitamins such as B1, B5, and B6 can also lead to an individual having muscle cramps. Vitamin B12, on the other hand, helps in the development of red blood cells (red blood cells carry oxygen throughout our body). Foods high in vitamin B are:

Tuna Milk Eggs Beef

Vitamin E: Vitamin E assists in the formation of red blood cells and is also necessary for the maintenance of skeletal, cardiac, and smooth muscle. Individuals with poor eating habits who tend to eat large amounts of processed foods, sugar, and alcohol tend to develop deficiencies, which can lead to fatigue. Foods that are high in vitamin E are:

Olive Oil Peanut Butter Avocados Legumes

Calcium: Calcium assists in maintaining bone strength, blood clotting, nerve impulses (our reaction or movement that is caused by an outside stimulus causes a muscle to contract), as well as PH and blood pressure control. A lack of calcium can result in fractures and osteoporosis. A few foods higher in calcium are:

⁴ Holick, p. 2-3

⁵ Merck Manual

Milk Products

Broccoli

Clams

Oatmeal

Iron: Iron plays a critical role in carrying oxygen to cells and removing carbon dioxide. A deficiency will cause a person to feel fatigued, thus inhibiting their exercise potential. Tea, coffee, and chocolate can inhibit iron absorption. Foods high in iron are:

Liver

Red Meat

Nuts

Spinach

Potassium: Potassium regulates water balance in the body, helps to generate muscle contractions, and regulates the heartbeat. A lack of potassium can cause fatigue, muscle weakness, and slower reflexes. Foods higher in potassium are:

Bananas

Sweet Potatoes

Peaches

Oranges

Sodium: Sodium is an electrolyte that assists in facilitating muscle contraction and nerve impulses and is also closely tied with the movement and balance of water throughout the body. Due to the abundance of sodium in practically all of the food we eat, we typically don't have sodium deficiencies. That being said, if you do have a deficiency, your symptoms could include cramps, nausea, and dizziness. A few healthy sources of sodium are:

Beets

Cantaloupe

Shrimp

Spinach

The RDA for sodium is 2,300 mg per day, and only 1500 mg for those with high blood pressure.⁶

Magnesium: Magnesium, another key mineral found within the body, plays a critical role in bone development and energy production. Levels of magnesium can be negatively affected by increased consumption of coffee, tea, soda, as well as alcohol. Refined sugar from sweets and desserts can cause magnesium to even be excreted from the body. Symptoms of a deficiency can include cramps, chronic pain, poor sleep, inflammation, and even depression. The RDA of magnesium is 400 mg for adults. Try eating these foods that are rich in magnesium:

Almonds

Black Beans

Brown Rice

Quinoa

Water: It is said that the human body is approximately 60% water, so why don't we drink enough even though we all know it is essential for life? I want you to ask yourself:

⁶ Nolan

Am I drinking enough water? I always tell my clients if you have to think about it, chances are you aren't getting enough.

Not only does water transport nutrients and minerals throughout the body, but it also helps to regulate body temperature, lubricate our joints, and assist our vital organs in performing more efficiently. Just a 2% decrease of water in our body can cause fatigue, loss of coordination, decreased mental focus, irritability, dry skin, elevated body temperature, cramps, loss of strength and endurance, and can cause our body to become toxic, which makes it difficult for our body to move and perform correctly.

So how important is water for your muscles and other connective tissues? I think a great analogy is a piece of beef jerky. Strange, I know, but what is beef jerky? It is dehydrated meat or tissue—it doesn't have any water in it, so it is firm, not very flexible, and tears pretty easily. Now compare that to a raw steak!

Sugar: Sugar is perhaps the best-tasting, most dangerous substance we have access to. In fact, many of us have a love/hate relationship with it. It is unfortunate that something that can taste so good can be so harmful! You may have heard this before, but sugar is sometimes referred to as an “empty calorie,” which means that it doesn't contain any nutritional value such as proteins, minerals, or vitamins.

According to the USDA, the average American consumes roughly 47 pounds of cane sugar and 35 pounds of high fructose corn syrup per year, YIKES! I know, I know, your brain is telling you that you want it. However, if this is the case, then you need to be aware of what is going on in the brain. Dopamine and serotonin are two chemicals that are produced in the brain that can be contributing factors to sugar addiction. Sugar can trigger the production of dopamine while decreases in serotonin can cause sugar cravings. Please remember that the more you feed your cravings, the more you want it! Braverman⁷ mentions that “Serotonin is made from tryptophan, and tryptophan supplementation frequently decreases sugar craving,” (p. 195) so if you are suffering from too much sugar, you may want to look at those foods again that are high in tryptophan.

So how does sugar affect our body? As we eat it, the sugar enters into our bloodstream, making our body more acidic. Calcium and magnesium can be leached from our bones and muscles, causing even weaker bones, muscle cramps, muscle tension, and, ultimately, muscle tightness. It can also cause an insulin spike, which can lead to inflammation throughout our body. Some of the more serious side effects of a sugar-rich diet can be Type 2 diabetes, obesity, depression, hypertension, and heart disease.

According to the American Heart Association, they recommend that women have 6 tsp,

⁷ Braverman (2004)

while men have 9 tsp. per day. Here is a list that may shock you, according to an article entitled, “18 Foods and Drinks That Are Surprisingly High In Sugar”:⁸

- Bottled smoothies (can contain 96 grams of sugar)
- Yogurt
- Condiments, i.e., Ketchup and BBQ sauce
- Energy drinks
- Protein bars

Amount of Exercise: This is very simple. If you don’t use it, you lose it. Typically, active people tend to be more flexible and move better than those who are sedentary. As we discussed earlier, active people tend to have better oxygen and blood flow throughout the body. This, along with their body’s connective tissue being in better shape, allows for better movement and flexibility.

Body Temperature: I prefer my clients to come ready to stretch. This means their body is already warmed up. Take 5-10 minutes on the treadmill, bike, or even in a hot shower to get ready to stretch.

Improper Breathing: Isn’t it funny how something that comes so naturally to us is one of the most misused aspects of fitness and therapy? We see it all the time in the gym and on our therapy tables: people not breathing correctly, or even holding their breath. Believe it or not, this only tightens your muscles! When we breathe properly, our oxygen levels increase, which allows our red blood cells to collect and carry it throughout our body to our body’s tissue. Proper breathing can also help to:

- Boost energy levels
- Improve stamina
- Counteract acids (e.g., lactic acid)
- Release toxins
- Relieve tension
- Relax the mind
- Relieve stress and anxiety
- Loosen muscles
- Relieve pain
- Increase muscle strength and flexibility

⁸ Article “18 Foods and Drinks That Are Surprisingly High In Sugar” (Need Magazine or book citation)

- Strengthen your immune system
- Metabolize vitamins and nutrients (leads to faster recovery)
- Increase blood flow
- Increase athletic ability
- Reduce tissue swelling

Physical Diagnosis: Unfortunately, we won't live a life without some sort of physical ailment. We can deal with the occasional strain and sprain, but the life of many people changes drastically after they are diagnosed with something unexpected. Parkinson's disease, Guillain-Barre syndrome, and stiff-person syndrome are just a few movement disorders with which we can be diagnosed. All of these disorders will affect how a person moves and the flexibility of the connective tissue in the body.

Sleep: Perhaps one of the most overlooked aspects of our physical health is sleep. We are all trying to get ahead in life, so we just continue to pile up more and more activities. As our list of activities continues to grow, and we can't find more time in the day to accomplish everything we set out for, we have no alternative other than to steal those precious hours at night. The lack of sleep affects us mentally and emotionally, and it also plays a necessary role in our physical health. Sleep, and in particular, *deep sleep*, not only helps to boost muscle growth and repair, but it promotes healing and repair of the heart and blood vessels as well.⁹

According to the National Sleep Foundation, children need approximately 9-11 hours of sleep, teens between the ages of 14-17 need 8-10 hours, adults should get between 7-9 hours, and individuals who are 65 and older should have at least 7-8 hours of sleep.

What we consume in our daily diet can affect our sleeping habits as well. Try to lessen your intake or avoid eating and drinking the biggest offenders, such as sugar and caffeine. Instead, try eating foods that are rich in vitamin D, magnesium, and calcium, as they can assist in relaxing the body. Another item you may want to introduce into your diet is tryptophan. Tryptophan is an amino acid that is used in the synthesis of serotonin and melatonin, both of which are thought to be involved in the regulation of sleep. Foods that are high in tryptophan are:

Turkey

Chicken

Bananas

Eggs

⁹ Lombardo, 2005

STRETCHING METHODS

Stretching has many different methods from which you can choose. Although they all have a place in an individual's fitness plan, they may not be for everyone. The methods I highly recommend are static and passive stretching. They are the most common forms of stretching and tend to be a little safer and more relaxing. My personal favorite forms of stretching are dynamic and PNF. I believe everyone can benefit from these two methods, but people have a tendency to think that only athletes do them, so they stay away. I, however, strongly urge you to try them. The last method of stretching is ballistic. I don't cover this much because in all honesty, I am not a big fan. The following is a list of the forms of stretching I'll be teaching you throughout this book.

Static Stretching: Static stretching is a method of stretching your muscles at rest, and is composed of various techniques that allow you to take a muscle to its optimal length and hold the position for 20-30 seconds. This method of stretching is what people typically perform and is a wonderful way to stretch out and relax after a workout. Some advantages of this method include:

- Safest form of stretching
- Enables you to sink into your stretch and focus on the area being stretched
- Allows for better mind and body relaxation
- Can create a permanent change in the length of the muscle
- Allows the person to focus more on proper breathing
- If done correctly, the stretch reflex does not initiate
- Can create a GTO (Golgi tendon organ – a sensory organ that senses changes in muscle tension) response

Passive Stretching: Similar to static stretching, passive stretching allows your body to relax fully during your stretch while you hold the position for 20-30 seconds. The difference between the two methods is that passive stretching utilizes an outside force to assist you with the stretch, such as:

- A partner
- Straps and towels
- Your hands, feet, and legs
- Body weight

Ballistic Stretching: Ballistic stretching uses bouncing-type movements to stretch the muscle, and the end position is not held. Using the standing toe touch as an example, when you bend forward at the hips to touch your toes, instead of holding the position, you bounce down toward

your feet and then right back up again. Each time you bounce, you are trying to get your hands lower and lower. Although this form can help highly trained athletes who train themselves on a daily basis for a sport that has quick, herky-jerky movements, I am personally not a big fan of this method of stretching. Ballistic movements force the muscle further than it wants to go, which initiates the stretch reflex and can raise the chance of injury to muscles, tendons, and joints. I strongly urge those with bad backs and previous injuries (as well as the weekend warrior) not to use this method.

Dynamic Stretching: Most commonly used by athletes, this method of stretching involves active movements that are typically sport-specific. Mostly done with the arms and legs, and sometimes rotational stretches, dynamic stretching utilizes movements to further warm up and stretch the body's connective tissue. When done correctly, this method can be beneficial to anybody who chooses to use it. A great example would be a martial artist performing a controlled straight leg front kick to increase flexibility in the hamstring. Things to remember when performing a dynamic stretch are:

- Focus on your posture.
- Hold on to a fixed point if balance is an issue.
- Use controlled movements.
- Start slow and easy and then progress with more power (if needed).

Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF): Greater flexibility provides our body with better movement, can reduce aches and pains, improve posture, and enhance physical performance. But simply having flexibility without some kind of power from a stretched position will only hinder your functional strength. Functional strength is the ability of an individual to exert usable strength and withstand the physical force that is placed on the body. PNF is the most advanced style of stretching that is used to increase flexibility as well as strength in the muscle, which in turn gives us better functional strength.

The PNF method was originally designed to help individuals with rehab, but it has allowed trained professionals to assist people from all walks of life. The PNF method is my preferred way of stretching. It is considered by many to be the superior method in improving mobility as well as increasing strength in the stretched muscle. The downfall of this method is that it requires a trained professional to truly achieve optimal results.

One of the greatest benefits of PNF stretching is that the person being stretched can focus totally on relaxing his/her body while their partner is doing all the work. As the person is being stretched, they are then able to focus on proper breathing while also focusing on that one particular area being stretched. I have been using the PNF method of stretching for nearly two decades and have been amazed by the benefits. As I am working, I use three basic techniques:

- **Contract – Relax:** In this method, a trained professional will push or pull the muscle until a stretch is felt, holding it for approximately 10 seconds. The therapist will instruct the recipient to push back against the stretch. The recipient will then contract the muscle by pushing back against the stretch as the professional provides just enough force to allow the limb to return to the starting point. The recipient then relaxes, and the process is repeated 3-4 times.
- **Hold – Relax:** Very similar to the contract-relax method, this method uses a trained professional to push or pull the muscle until a stretch is felt, again holding the stretch for approximately 10 seconds. The recipient will be instructed to push back against the therapist, but with this method, the therapist holds the stretch for approximately 5 seconds, not allowing the recipient's body to return to the starting position. The recipient of the stretch is then asked to relax as the therapist continues to stretch the muscle. This is repeated 3-4 times before returning the body to the starting position.

Hold – Relax – Contract: This method is a fantastic way to stretch, but, in my opinion, should only be done with highly trained individuals. Again, this method uses a professional who will push or pull the muscle until a stretch is felt. The recipient will then be asked to push/pull back against the stretch, which will be held for 5-10 seconds. Then the professional will instruct the recipient to pull back away from the stretch. The recipient contracts the opposite muscle getting stretched, pulling his/her body away from the professional's hand. At this point, the professional will gently push/pull the recipient's body and hold this final stretch for 5-10 seconds.

SELF-EVALUATION TOOL

As great as daily stretching is, what good is it to stretch a *portion* of the body daily while neglecting other areas that may be the actual cause of your pain and discomfort? It is very important for you to understand that stretching is only as good as you make it. Whether you want to increase your flexibility for athletics, or just want to loosen up rigid muscles so you don't hurt any more, you should always perform a self-evaluation. Now that we've gone over the benefits of stretching, factors affecting flexibility, and different methods of stretching, I invite you to do this self-evaluation before committing to a particular routine.

This evaluation will:

- Force you to take inventory of your own body and help to clarify any questions you may have about your own flexibility.
- Get you out of the rut of performing the same old stretches you do every day.
- Teach you what areas of the body, if tight, will create pain in other areas of the body.
- Give you a record of where you are so you can reevaluate your progress.

Before I work on anybody, I ask the following series of questions to help me determine what the individual is dealing with. Place a checkmark next to any of the following items that apply to you. By answering these questions, they will give you information not only about areas of the body that you should work on, but also areas to stay away from as well (such as areas where you have an injury to the bone or joint, pulled or torn muscle, torn ligament or tendon, and herniated or bulging discs).

Musculoskeletal:

- Arthritis
- Lower back pain
- Upper back pain
- Hip pain
- Injury to bone or joint
- Pulled or torn muscle
- Torn ligament or tendon
- Artificial joint
- Sciatic nerve pain
- Painful or swollen joints
- Shoulder, elbow, or wrist problems
- Herniated or bulging discs

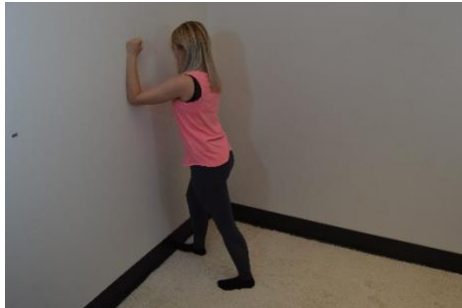
On the following pages, I provide you a photo with the instructions on how to perform each stretch within the self-evaluation. I ask you to perform each stretch and circle your score below before starting any stretching routine. Doing this will allow you to understand what areas of your body move better than others and what areas need more attention. After you have your scores, work a little more diligently on those areas that are closer to number 1. With 1 meaning very little movement and 10 being great, how would you rate your range of motion in the following areas? Use the stretches that follow to help you gauge your flexibility.

- Calf 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Lower Hamstring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Upper Hamstring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Hips 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Inner Thigh 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Quadriceps 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Hip Flexors 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Spinal Rotation 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Shoulders 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Rotator Cuff 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Triceps 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Chest 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

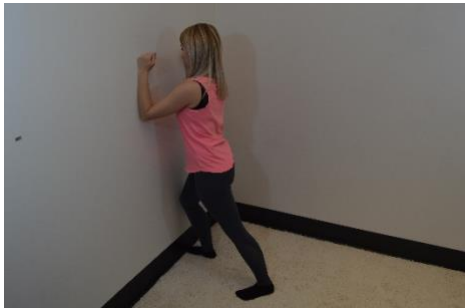
Calf



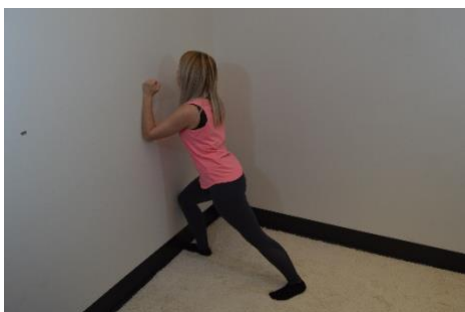
- Begin this stretch by placing the toes of one of your feet at the base of the wall.
- Placing both elbows on the wall, place your other foot a couple of feet behind you with toes pointed forward.
- Slowly lean a bit forward and down, taking your front knee and moving it toward the wall.
- Keep the heel of your back foot on the ground.
- If you can take your front knee to the wall without feeling a stretch, move your back foot back.



Rating of (1) Your front knee doesn't touch the wall and you are very limited on how far your back leg extends.



Rating of (5) Your front knee touches the wall, but you are limited on how far your back leg extends.



Rating of (10) Your front knee touches the wall and your leg is extended fully back, keeping your heel to the floor.

Lower Hamstring



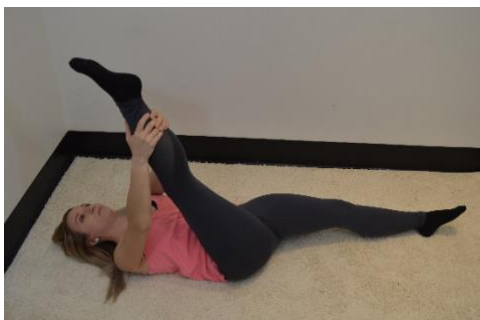
- Lie on your back, bend one knee so the bottom of your foot rests flat on the floor.
- Raise the other leg off the floor and grasp the lower portion of your calf.
- Keep your leg straight while pulling it toward you.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.



Rating of (1) You are unable to relax your head as you struggle to raise and hold your leg off the floor. You are also unable to extend your opposite leg.



Rating of (5) Your opposite leg stays bent, but you are able to grab and pull back on your leg and relax your head back.



Rating of (10) You are able to fully extend your opposite leg while comfortably pulling your leg all the way back. Your head is relaxed.

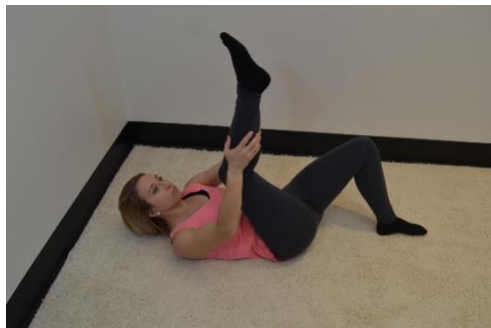
Upper Hamstring



- Lie on your back with the bottom of one foot flat on the floor or bed.
- Raise your other leg off the floor and grasp the lower portion of your calf.
- With your knee bent, pull your leg down and toward your head.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.



Rating of (1) You are unable to relax your head as you must grab the back of your leg to pull back. Your opposite leg remains bent.



Rating of (5) You are able to pull back while grabbing your calf, but have a difficult time relaxing your head as your opposite leg is bent.



Rating of (10) You are able to fully extend your opposite leg while comfortably pulling your leg all the way back. Your head is also able to rest on the floor.

Hips



- In a seated position, place your right ankle on your left knee.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly lean forward at the hips.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.



Rating of (1) You struggle to even get your ankle up on your knee. It is also very difficult to relax in this position.



Rating of (5) You are able to place your ankle on your knee, but you feel a stretch in your hip while pushing down your knee without leaning forward.



Rating of (10) Your ankle rests on your knee and you are able to lean forward, nearly touching your chest to your leg that is parallel to the floor.

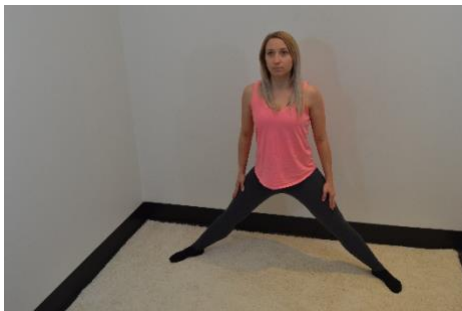
Inner Thighs



- In a standing position, slowly spread your feet apart.
- Ensuring your toes are pointed up, lower your body as far as you can (into a full split if you are able). Balance yourself by placing your hands on the floor or other stable object.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.



Rating of (1) You begin to feel a stretch when your feet are a little wider than shoulder width.



Rating of (5) You are able to get yourself halfway down to the ground as you comfortably feel the stretch.



Rating of (10) You are envied by many as you comfortably go all the way down into the splits position.

Quadriceps



- Lie flat on your stomach.
- Pull your leg up toward your rear end and grab your ankle.
- Pull your foot in toward your rear end.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.



Rating of (1) You are unable to grab your leg to pull it back into your glutes.



Rating of (5) You are able to grab your leg and slightly pull it down. You are unable to rest your head fully down to the ground.



Rating of (10) You are able to relax your whole body as you pull your heel into your glutes.

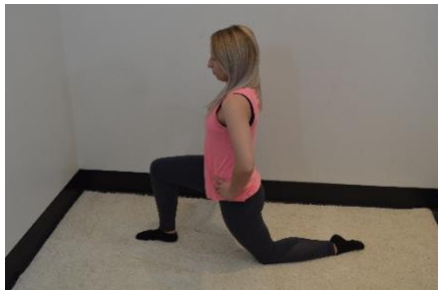
Hip Flexors



- Get down on both knees and place one foot forward in a lunge position.
- Take your weight down and forward, keeping your posture nice and tall.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.



Rating of (1) You are able to get down to a knee, but you are unable to move your body down and forward toward the ground.



Rating of (5) You keep your forward leg in approximately a 90-degree angle as you are able to press your hip flexor down toward the ground.

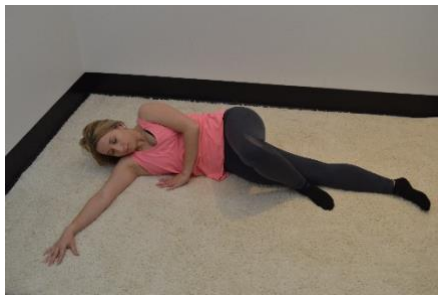


Rating of (10) Your front leg may even be at an 80- or 70-degree angle while you can nearly touch your hip flexor to the floor.

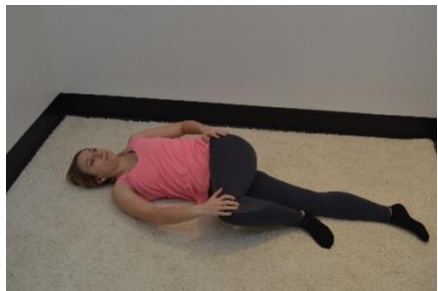
Spinal Rotation



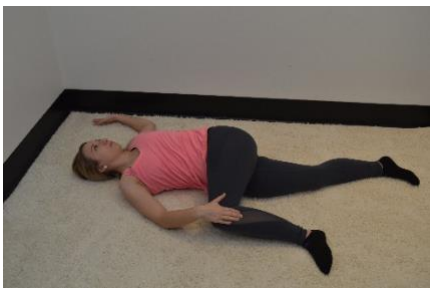
- Lie on your side, bend your top leg and place it at a 90-degree angle.
- Slowly push your top shoulder back to the ground, holding your upper knee down to the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.



Rating of (1) You are unable to fully relax. Your head doesn't rest on the floor, your bent knee doesn't touch the floor and you are unable to lower your top shoulder down toward the floor.



Rating of (5) You are able to relax your head to the floor. You are also able to lower your upper shoulder halfway down to the floor while slightly pulling your bent knee down toward the floor.

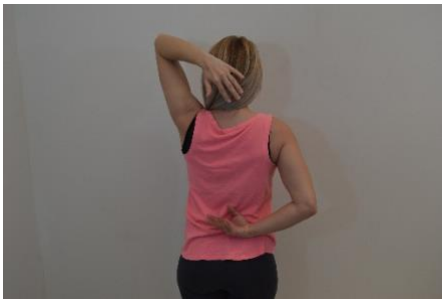


Rating of (10) You are able to fully relax your head, shoulders, and bent knee all the way down to the floor.

Shoulders



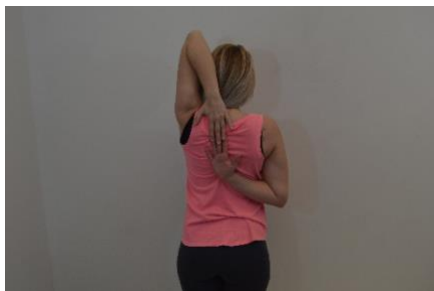
- Place one arm behind your back, and one arm bent over your head.
- Interlock your fingers and slowly pull your hands together.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.



Rating of (1) You have a difficult time even getting your hands behind your back.



Rating of (5) Your hands are about six inches from touching.



Rating of (10) You are able to lock your hands together.

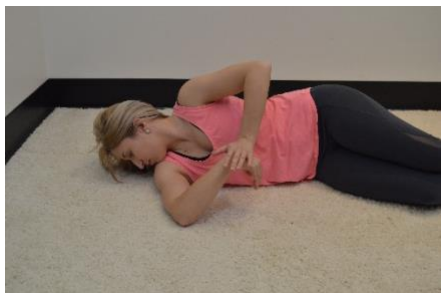
Rotator Cuff



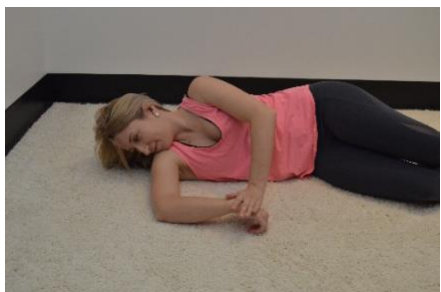
- Lying on your side, bring your arm out to a 90-degree angle. Bend your elbow and wrist also to a 90-degree angle.
- Looking straight down, place your chin on your shoulder.
- Using your other hand, grab your wrist and gently push your elbow down into the ground. Slowly push your hand down toward the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.



Rating of (1) You are able to get your arm and hand into a 90-degree angle, but unable to take your hand toward the ground.



Rating of (5) With your arm and hand in a 90-degree angle, you are able to get your hand halfway down to the ground.

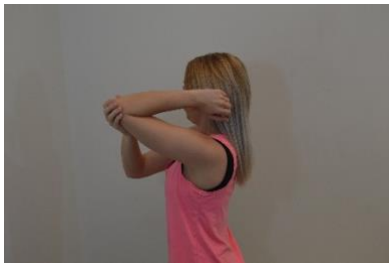


Rating of (10) After achieving the 90-degree angles, you are able to touch your fingers to the floor.

Triceps



- In a standing or seated position, raise your arm over your head, bending at your elbow.
- Take your other hand and grab your elbow.
- Slowly pull your elbow back behind your head.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.



Rating of (1) You are unable to get your elbow up much higher than your shoulder.



Rating of (5) You are able to get your elbow up to your head, but your arm is pointed forward.

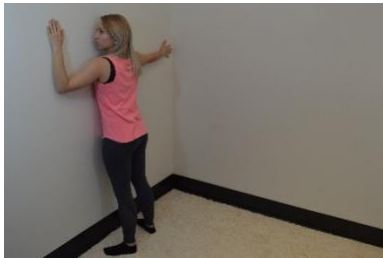


Rating of (10) You are able to get your elbow all the way up and back behind your head. Your arm is slightly pointed straight up or even slightly back.

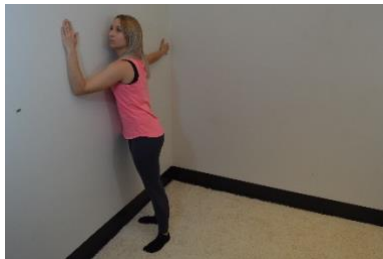
Chest



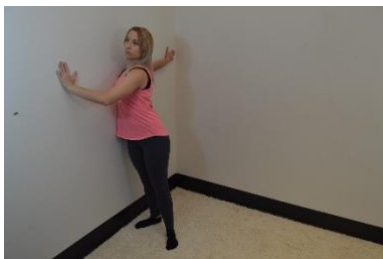
- Face a wall in a standing position.
- Place your hand, elbow, and shoulder against the wall.
- Move the opposite foot slightly away from the wall, and place your opposite palm on the wall.
- Keeping your hand, elbow, and shoulder against the wall, slowly turn your opposite shoulder away from the wall.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.



Rating of (1) You place your palm against the wall, but you are unable to rotate while keeping your shoulder (or even elbow) against the wall.



Rating of (5) You are able to keep your palm and elbow against the wall while rotating, but your shoulder begins to come away from the wall as your opposite foot steps further from the wall.



Rating of (10) You are able to stand with your side to the wall and your hand, elbow, and shoulder pressed against the wall (notice foot positions).

Static, Passive, and PNF Stretches

Whether you are a 15-year-old wannabe athlete, a 25-year-old professional athlete, a 40-year-old wondering why you are sore all the time, or an 80-year-old who has some sort of adverse physical condition, there is one thing we all want to improve: our *functional strength*.

Functional strength is the ability of an individual to exert usable strength and withstand the physical force that is placed on the body. After years of working with people from all walks of life, I understand that this is our main objective in living a productive and pain-free physical lifestyle.

Whether you know it or not, functional strength either helps or prevents you from achieving your daily physical goals. It can be something that many of us take for granted, like climbing out of a chair, getting up off the ground, or even just standing upright. It can also be something that a lot of us wish we could do, like hitting the golf ball 300 yards, throwing a 95 mile-an-hour fastball, or jumping 3 feet off the ground to make a spectacular interception in the end zone. The question is, do we have the motivation and the attitude to make our functional strength grow in order to sustain it?

Lou Holtz once said that “Ability is what you’re capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it.”

Functional strength doesn’t just come from lifting weights in a gym. It is attained through a comprehensive physical fitness program that works on *all* aspects of physical movement. Weight training plays a key role, but if you aren’t working on your flexibility as well, you are missing a key component in your overall well-being. The stretches within this book were compiled to give you multiple options so that you can choose those that best fit your own personal needs. They have been grouped together by difficulty and muscle group, but understand that many of the stretches can (and will) be felt in other areas of the body as well.

I have also separated the stretches into two different sections, with the first being static and passive stretches. As you are going through this section, remember that passive stretching utilizes an outside force such as a partner, straps, a towel, or a machine like a cable crossover; whereas static stretches are different poses and positions you get your body into to feel a stretch. I would prefer you do these stretches after your workout, not before, or even on days off after your warm-up.

The second section is dynamic stretches. I mentioned earlier in the book that dynamic stretches are typically done by athletes, which is true, but I am really making a push for my clients to add it to their daily exercise and stretching routine, and I urge you to do the same. Dynamic stretches involve active movements to stretch the muscle. They may be more of a workout than a nice relaxing stretch for some of you, but this is also why I want you to do them. Add these in after your warm-up and before your workout to get the most out of your muscles. You can also do these on a daily basis, even if you are not planning to work out.

As you go through the stretches that follow, take note that I have separated the stretches into three different categories: **Anyone**, **Intermediate**, and **Advanced**. When deciding on what stretches you should incorporate, I strongly suggest that you utilize your self-evaluation. If your score falls between 1-4, I suggest using the stretches that **Anyone** can do. Scores between 5-7 should focus on the **Intermediate** and also the stretches that **Anyone** can do. For those of you with a score of 8-10, you can also add in the **Advanced** stretches.

Please note that many stretches are advanced and can be dangerous for some people to try. Some stretches also utilize equipment, such as a T-Stretch strap, a ball, or even weights. My desire to write this book was to give everybody a wide variety of stretches to incorporate into their daily lives. Before you start your program, there are a few things you want to do:

- Consult a physician before beginning.
- Warm up for at least 5-10 minutes.
- Take stretching seriously! Focus on what you are trying to accomplish.
- Focus on posture. You should sit or stand nice and tall, no slouching.
- Move slowly in and out of each stretch.
- Focus on proper breathing. As you breathe in, focus on that oxygen going to the muscle you are stretching.
- Be comfortable when stretching. Wear loose-fitting or stretchy clothes.
- Consciously focus on the muscle being stretched.
- If you are performing a static or passive stretch, hold the stretch for at least 20-30 seconds.
- Get rid of all distractions. Find a quiet place to stretch.

STATIC AND PASSIVE STRETCHES

Static and passive are the two most widely used forms of stretching that people use today. Both methods are easy to perform and are typically a little more relaxing. I encourage you to take advantage of these two methods *after* your workout. Always remember that a warm muscle is easier and safer to stretch than a cold one. If you decide that you would like to stretch and you haven't worked out, I would still encourage you to perform a 5- to 10-minute warm-up. A few key points to remember are:

- Focus on your breathing.
- Use a foam roller to help release adhesions in the muscles.
- Ensure proper posture
- Find a relaxing area to stretch.
- Concentrate on fully relaxing your body.
- Hold each stretch for at least 20-30 seconds, but don't be afraid to hold it for several minutes as long as you feel comfortable.

ANKLES, FEET, AND SHINS

When you make your decision to stretch, how many of your stretches are focused on your ankles, feet, or shins? Most people don't even think about stretching these areas unless they have some sort of problem, and trust me—you don't want to have those problems! Some common issues that can arise are:

- Arthritis
- Shin splints
- Plantar Fasciitis
- Tight Achilles tendon
- Ankle sprains
- Dropped arches (which can cause your foot to roll in)



- Place smooth rocks or spacers in between your toes.
- I particularly like doing this with the rocks warmed. You can accomplish this by placing the rocks in hot water. Just ensure that the rocks are not too hot. **(Anybody)**



- Sitting in an upright position, place your ankle on your knee.
- Grasp your toes at the top of the foot and slowly pull your toes down.
- Hold the stretch, relax, and ensure proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Sitting in an upright position, place your ankle on your knee.
- Grasp underneath your toes and slowly pull your toes up.
- Hold the stretch, relax, and ensure proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Start this stretch from your hands and knees.
- Take one leg straight back and place toes on the floor.
- Slowly lean back into your back foot.
- Though you may feel this in your calf as well, ensure that you are focusing on stretching the bottom of the foot.
- Hold the stretch, relax, and ensure proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- You can perform this simple dynamic stretch sitting on the floor or in a chair.
- With your legs straight out in front of you, point your toes as far as you can, hold for a second or two, and then pull your toes toward you as far as you can.
- Relax and repeat this 10-15 times, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Start off this stretch in a sitting position. Place an ankle on top of the opposite knee.
- Take hold of your foot and rotate your foot in a large circle.
- This stretch will take some time to learn how to do it properly. Many people want to help rotate the foot with the muscles that are supposed to be relaxed.
- Work on relaxing those muscles around your ankle while you manually rotate your foot.
- Relax and repeat this 10-15 times, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Standing up with one leg slightly in front of the other, curl your toes under your foot.
- Very gently lean forward and push down and into your foot.
- Hold the stretch, relax, and ensure proper breathing.
- Do not do this stretch if you have balance issues. **(Intermediate)**



- Standing up with one leg slightly in front of the other, rotate on the outside of your foot.
- Slowly push down and feel the stretch on the outside of the foot and ankle.
- Hold the stretch, relax and ensure proper breathing.
- Do not do if you have balance issues. **(Intermediate)**



- Start this position on your knees with your toes pointed backward.
- Slowly sit down on your heels.
- Relax and hold this position, ensuring proper breathing.
- The second picture shows an even more advanced version of this stretch with a towel placed under her feet. **(Intermediate)**



- A third and even more advanced version of this stretch has her sitting on her feet.
- She then reaches back to pull her toes up.
- Relax and hold the position. **(Advanced)**

CALVES

Do you remember that children's song about how your thigh bone is connected to your hip bone? I actually use this song when I talk to people about the human body because it works that way with our muscles as well. Just because you feel pain in one area doesn't necessarily mean that is where the problem is. The calf is a great example of how tightness in one area may affect other areas of the body as well. Some common problems with tight calves are:

- Calf pain
- Foot and heel pain
- Plantar fasciitis
- Problems with the Achilles tendon
- Knee pain
- Shin splints
- Pain up into the hamstrings, glutes (hip), and even lower back



- Begin this stretch by placing the toes of one of your feet at the base of the wall.
- Placing both elbows on the wall, place your other foot a couple of feet behind you with toes pointed forward.
- Slowly lean a bit forward and down, taking your front knee and moving it toward the wall.
- Keep the heel of your back foot on the ground.
- If you can take your front knee to the wall without feeling a stretch, move your back foot back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Standing approximately an arm's length away from the wall, stand with your feet about six inches apart with toes pointed forward.
- Lean on the wall with both elbows. Ensure that you keep a straight line with your knees, hips, back, and neck. Do not let your hips sink in toward the wall.
- Stand with both heels on the ground.
- If your heels are on the ground and you do not feel a stretch, move back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- These two pictures show a couple of different ways to position your feet when doing the previous stretch.
- Turn feet out or in before leaning into the wall to stretch a totally different area in the calf.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Place the ball of your foot on the edge of any type of riser or step.
- Keeping your leg straight, slowly push the heel of your foot down. Keeping your body nice and tall, slowly lean forward to enhance the stretch.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Hold on to something for added balance. **(Anyone)**



- Place the ball of your foot on the edge of any riser or step.
- Bend your knee slightly and slowly push the heel of your foot down. Keeping your body nice and tall, slowly lean forward to enhance the stretch.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Hold on to something for added balance. **(Anyone)**



- Standing with your body nice and tall, place the balls of your feet on the edge of any riser or step.
- Keeping both legs straight, slowly lower both heels toward the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Hold on to something for added balance. **(Anyone)**



- Sit with both legs straight in front of you.
- Place a strap or towel around the ball of your foot (just below your toes).
- Relax your foot and pull the strap back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- You may also want to sit against the wall for added support. **(Anyone)**



- Sit with both legs straight in front of you.
- Place a rolled-up towel under your heel.
- Relax your leg so that the back of your knee lowers toward the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- You may also want to sit against the wall for added support. **(Anyone)**



- Sitting with both legs straight in front of you, place a rolled-up towel under your heel.
- Place a strap or towel around the ball of your foot (just below your toes).
- Relax your foot and pull the strap back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Sitting against the wall will give you some added support. **(Anyone)**



- Sit in a chair with another chair or stationary object in front of you. Place a rolled-up towel on the chair in front of you.
- Put your foot on top of the towel and relax your knee down toward the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a seated position, place the T-Stretch strap around your ankle and up the bottom of your foot.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, relax your foot and pull the strap toward you.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lying flat on your back, place the T-Stretch strap around your ankle and up the bottom of your foot.
- Bring your leg straight up and pull back and down on the strap.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing position, cross one leg in front of the other.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall (try not to arch the back), bend forward at the hips. This move will give you an intense stretch behind the knee.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. Slowly rise up when you are done. **(Intermediate)**



- Sit with both legs straight in front of you.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend forward at the hips and grab your toes.
- Pull toes back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Begin this stretch in a push-up position.
- Slowly move your hands back toward your feet and lift your hips higher in the air.
- Slowly push your heels back into the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- End the stretch by returning to a push-up position. **(Advanced)**

HAMSTRINGS

The hamstrings consist of three muscles that, when tight, can be the cause of a number of problems. Whether you realize it or not, our hamstrings play a major role in how we move daily. Whether you are a martial arts student trying to improve your front kicks, or if you are someone just trying to improve the length of your stride when you walk, you want to focus on stretching these three muscles. Common problems associated with tight hamstrings are:

- Arthritic pain
- Knee pain
- Hip pain
- Back pain
- Sacroiliac joint pain (located at the bottom of the spine)
- Poor posture



- Sit toward the end of a chair with one leg bent and the other leg straight out with the heel on the floor.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend forward at the hips until you reach a stretched position. Do not hunch your back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Lying on your back, place the T-Stretch strap around your ankle and up the bottom of your foot.
- Keeping your leg straight, pull your leg toward you.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Lying on your back, place the T-Stretch strap around your ankle and under the bottom of your foot.
- With your knee bent, pull leg down and toward your head.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Sit with your legs straight out in front of you.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend forward at the hips until you reach a stretched position. Do not hunch your back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Sit on the edge of your bed or table.
- Place one leg straight out on the table and the other leg on the floor for balance.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend forward at the hips until you reach a stretched position. Do not hunch your back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Sit with your back flat against the wall.
- Place your legs together, straight out in front of you.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, move your rear end toward the wall.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- While lying on your back, have your partner pick one leg up, placing one hand just above the knee on your thigh and the other hand just above your heel.
- Keeping your leg straight, have your partner slowly push your leg back until the stretch is felt.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Stand with both feet together.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend forward at the hips. Do not hunch your back.
- With this stretch, you can let your arms hang, place them on the back of your head, or grab your calves.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Stand with your legs straight and a little wider than shoulder-width apart.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend forward at the hips toward the right side.
- Grasp behind the leg and pull down slightly.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Stand with your legs straight and feet a little wider than shoulder-width apart.
- Keeping a nice tall posture, bend forward at the hips.
- If you are unable to touch the floor, grasp behind your legs and hold.
- If you are able to touch the floor, work on placing your palms on the floor (don't force it).
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Bad backs beware. **(Intermediate)**



- In a seated position, place one leg straight out in front of you. Bend the other leg and place the foot behind you.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend forward at the hips.
- Slowly reach for your toes.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- In a seated position, place one leg straight out in front of you. Bend the other leg and place the foot behind you with your knee pointed out.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend forward at the hips.
- Slowly reach for your toes.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your back, bend one knee so the bottom of your foot rests flat on the floor.
- Raise the other leg off the floor and grasp the lower portion of your calf.
- Keep your leg straight while pulling it toward you.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your back with the bottom of one foot flat on the floor or bed.
- Raise your other leg off the floor and grasp the lower portion of your calf.
- With your knee bent, pull your leg down and toward your head.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- In a seated position, straighten one leg and place it out into a splits position. Bend your other leg and bring your foot in close to your body.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend toward the straightened leg.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- In a seated position, straighten one leg and place it out in a splits position. Bend your other leg and bring your foot in close to your body.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend forward.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- In a seated position, straighten one leg and place it out in a splits position. Bend your other leg and bring your foot in close to your body.
- Straighten both arms above your head.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, perform a side bend toward the straightened leg.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place your foot on a stationary object. The more flexibility you have, the higher you can place your foot.
- Keeping your back straight, lean toward your foot.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lying on the floor, position yourself near a doorway.
- Place the leg you would like to stretch up the edge of the wall and your other leg through the doorway.
- Move your body toward the doorway until you feel the stretch.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Lying on the floor, position yourself near a doorway.
- Place the leg you would like to stretch up the edge of the wall and your other leg through the doorway. Move your body toward the wall until the stretch is felt.
- Place a T-Stretch strap over the ball of your foot and pull your toes down.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Lying on your back, place both legs straight up on a wall.
- Move your body as close to the wall as you can. The goal is to eventually get your rear end to the wall.
- Place a strap over the balls of both feet and pull down.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Ensure that your rear end and lower back do not come off the floor. Move away from the wall until you are flat on the ground. **(Advanced)**



- Lying on your back, place both legs straight up the wall.
- Slowly move your body in toward the wall until the stretch is felt.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Ensure that your rear end and lower back do not rise off the floor. Move back in order to lie flat on the floor. **(Advanced)**



- Lying on your back, place both legs straight up the wall, ensure that your rear end and lower back stay on the floor.
- Slowly move your body in toward the wall until the stretch is felt. You will feel this in your hamstrings and possibly even your mid back.
- Place both arms straight out on the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Lying on your back, place both legs straight up the wall. Ensure that your rear end and lower back stay on the floor.
- Slowly move your body in toward the wall until the stretch is felt.
- Reach both arms over your head. You may feel this stretch in your mid- to upper back as well.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Sit with your legs straight out in front of you.
 - Keeping your posture nice and tall, have your partner GENTLY push on your upper back while you reach for your toes.
 - Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
 - Communicate with your partner, letting him/her know when you feel the stretch.
- (Advanced)**



- Place your heel on the center of the ball and lower yourself so your other knee is on the ground (use a wall or other stationary object for support if necessary).
- Keep your leg slightly bent and your posture nice and tall. Slowly move the ball toward you.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Place your heel on the center of the ball and lower yourself so your other knee is on the ground (use a wall or other stationary object for support if necessary).
- Keeping your leg slightly bent and your posture nice and tall, slowly bend down to grab your foot.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Place your heel on the center of the ball and lower yourself so your other knee is on the ground (use a wall or other stationary object for support if necessary).
- Focus on keeping your leg straight while keeping your posture nice and tall.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Place your heel on the center of the ball and lower yourself so your other knee is on the ground (use a wall or other stationary object for support if necessary).
- Focusing on keeping your leg straight and your posture nice and tall, slowly lean forward to reach for your foot.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Place your heel on the center of the ball and lower yourself so your other knee is on the ground (use a wall or other stationary object for support if necessary).
- Focus on keeping your leg straight while leaning to the other side.
- Place your opposite hand on the floor while reaching to the sky with your other arm.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**

ADDUCTORS

There is a common misconception, primarily among men, that the hip adductors don't need work. I have heard all sorts of excuses, anything from, "I am not in karate" to, "That is only for women." I am sorry to burst your bubble, men, but this muscle group is not only important for everyday actions, such as walking, but tight or weak hip adductors can cause:

- Arthritic pain
- Knee pain
- Hip pain
- Lower back pain
- Decreased circulation down the leg



- In a standing position, spread your legs approximately three feet apart.
- Keeping your right foot pointed forward, turn your left foot out to the side.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, lunge to the left side and push down with right hip.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- In a seated position, bend your knees and bring the bottoms of your feet together.
- Sitting nice and tall, pull your feet in close to your body.
- Let your knees lay down to the ground.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- In a seated position, bend your knees and bring the bottoms of your feet together.
- Sitting nice and tall, pull your feet in close to your body.
- Let your knees relax down to the ground and slowly push down on your knees.
- Relax and hold position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Start in a seated position, keeping your posture nice and tall.
- Spread your legs as far as they will let you go.
- If you have a tendency to want to lean back, sit with your back against a wall to keep you from rocking back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- In a seated position, spread your legs as far as they will let you go.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall and your toes pointed up, bend to one side.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- In a seated position, spread your legs as far as they will go.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall and your toes pointed up, bend forward at the hips.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- In a seated position, bend your knees and bring the bottoms of your feet together.
- Pull your feet in close to your body.
- Let your knees lay down to the ground. Pushing your knees down with your elbows, slowly lean forward.
- Relax and hold position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your back on the floor, pull yourself in toward the wall. Straighten your legs up the wall.
- Bend your knees and bring the bottoms of your feet together.
- Pull your feet down the wall toward your hips.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing.
- Changing the arm placement from your stomach to reaching out into a T-position may add a little more intensity to the stretch, and you may feel it in your back. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your back on the floor and pull yourself in toward the wall. Straighten your legs up the wall.
- Bend your knees and bring the bottoms of your feet together.
- Pull your feet down the wall toward your hips and slowly push your knees in toward the wall.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your back on the floor, pulling yourself in toward the wall. Straighten your legs up the wall.
- Slowly lower your legs out to the side.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- In a standing position, slowly spread your feet apart until you feel the stretch in between your legs.
- Keep your posture nice and tall.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing.
- This stretch puts pressure on the inside of your knees. Do not perform this stretch if you have bad or unstable knees. **(Intermediate)**



- Stand with your feet approximately three feet apart.
- Squat down, keeping your knees above your heels.
- Place your elbows on the inside of your knees and push out.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place the inside of your foot on top of a bed or table.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly bend down toward your foot on the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place the inside of your foot on top of your bed or table.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly lean into your top leg.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place the inside of your foot on top of your bed or table.
- Stretch your arms above your head and slowly perform a side bend toward your top leg.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place the inside of your foot on top of your bed or table.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly bend down at the hips, grabbing both ankles.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place a T-Stretch strap around your foot and lie flat on your back.
- Take your leg as far out to the side as you can.
- Using one arm, pull on the strap, pulling your leg out even further.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Get down on both knees. Bend your left knee and place it out so your knee and toes are pointed to the side.
- Slowly take your weight to the left side and push your groin down toward the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lying on your back, place the bottom of your feet together and relax your knees out.
- Have your partner GENTLY push your knees down toward the table.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Communicate with your partner, letting him/her know when you feel the stretch.

(Intermediate)



- In a seated position, place the bottom of your feet together and relax your knees out.
- Have your partner GENTLY push your knees down toward the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Communicate with your partner, letting him/her know when you feel the stretch.

(Intermediate)



- In a seated position, spread your legs as far out as they can go.
- Keeping your posture tall, have your partner GENTLY push down on your upper back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Communicate with your partner, letting him/her know when you feel the stretch.

(Advanced)



- In a seated position, spread your legs as far out as they will go.
- While trying to avoid hunching over, reach down toward your foot. Have your partner GENTLY push down on your upper back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Communicate with your partner, letting him/her know when you feel the stretch. **(Advanced)**



- Spread your legs approximately twice your shoulder width.
- Squat down on the right side, keeping your left leg straight.
- Keeping your arms in a straight line with your left leg, slowly push the inside of your left leg to the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**

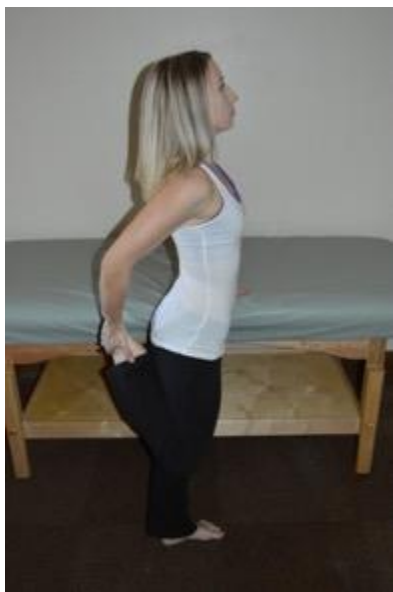


- In a standing position, slowly spread your feet apart.
- Ensuring your toes are pointed up, lower your body as far as you can (into a full split if you are able). Balance yourself by placing your hands on the floor or other stable object.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**

THIGHS AND HIP FLEXORS

Everything we do on a daily basis can tighten our muscles, creating pain all over our body. Whether you are a hiker, biker, or an office worker who sits behind a desk all day, you are at risk of suffering from tight thighs and hip flexors. Some common problems that can occur are:

- Arthritic pain
- Poor posture
- Knee pain
- Hip pain
- Lower back pain



- Stand with both feet together, keeping your posture nice and tall.
- Pick one leg up behind you, reach around and grab your foot.
- Pull your knee in toward your rear end. Try not to let your knee move forward.
- Keep your posture nice and tall, not letting your shoulder slump forward.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- If you have trouble keeping balanced, hold on to something sturdy. **(Anybody)**



- Lie on your side.
- Bring one leg back and grab it with your hand.
- Pull your knee in toward your rear end, keeping it from moving forward.
- Keep your body from tipping forward.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Place a T-Stretch strap around your foot and lie flat on your stomach.
- Holding the strap with both hands, begin to pull your foot up toward your rear end.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anybody)**



- Lie on your back on the edge of your bed or table.
- Hang one leg off the side of the table.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Get down on both knees and place one foot forward in a lunge position.
- Take your weight down and forward, keeping your posture nice and tall.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Using your bed or table, lie on your stomach on the side of the table with one leg supporting you on the ground.
- Put your elbows underneath your shoulders and rise up, looking straight ahead. Focus on pushing your thigh into the table.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Sitting in a chair, start with your leg straightened.
- Keeping your posture tall, slowly move your heel in under the chair.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lie on the floor/bed with both legs in a straightened position.
- Keeping your foot touching the floor or bed, slowly bend your knee, bringing your heel in toward your glutes.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- As you get more movement in your knee, you can also begin to use a strap or towel to help pull your foot back. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing position, place a towel between your knees.
- Squeezing the towel, slowly bend your knee, bringing your foot up behind you.
- Don't let the towel fall.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Hold on to the wall or other stationary object for stability. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie flat on your stomach.
- Pull your leg up toward your rear end and grab your ankle.
- Pull your foot in toward your rear end.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Holding onto a stable surface, kneel on the ground.
- Lift your foot and place it on top of a chair.
- Keep your posture nice and tall, even with a slightly arched back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Holding onto a stable surface, kneel on the ground.
- Lift your foot and place it on top of a chair.
- Move your other leg forward into a lunge position.
- Take your weight down and forward, keeping your posture nice and tall.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place a T-Stretch strap around your foot. Keep a hold of the strap.
- Lie on your back on the edge of your bed or table.
- Hang your leg off the side of the table and pull your foot up.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Standing with your feet together, place one leg forward into a lunge position.
- Keeping your back leg straight and your forward knee above your heel, move your weight down toward the ground. Ensure your posture is nice and tall.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Standing with your feet together, place one leg forward into a lunge position.
- Keeping your back leg straight and your forward knee above your heel, lean forward at the hips and place both hands on the ground.
- Move your weight down toward the ground.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Using your bed or table, lie on your stomach on the side of the table with one leg supporting you on the ground.
- Place your hands underneath your shoulders and rise up, looking straight ahead. Focus on pushing your thigh into the table.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lying on your stomach, place a riser like a pillow or the foam roller just above your knee.
- Place the strap around your foot and pull your foot toward your head.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your back on the side of a table with one leg hanging down.
- Have a partner assist you by holding down on the hip on the table and slowly pushing down on the knee of the hanging leg.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place your tailbone at the edge of the table and lie back.
- Your partner will place one foot at his/her chest while your other leg hangs down.
- Your partner pushes the knee down slowly until a stretch is felt.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place your tail bone at the edge of the table and lie back.
- Your partner will place one foot at his/her chest while your other leg hangs down.
- Your partner pushes the knee down and uses his/her foot to slowly push your foot back toward the table.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Get down on both knees and place one foot out into a lunge position. Keeping your posture tall, move your body forward and hips down toward the floor.
- Have your partner place his/her fist just above your glutes and have them push down and forward.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Get down on both knees and place one foot out into a lunge position. Keeping your posture tall, move your body forward and hips down toward the floor.
- Have your partner grab the top of your foot and GENTLY pull your foot up off the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place a T-Stretch strap around your ankle and up over your toes.
- Lie on your stomach, holding the strap behind your head.
- Pull the strap over your head, lifting your knee off the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place one leg forward into a lunge position, straddling the ball.
- Keeping your back leg straight and your front knee above your heel, move your weight down toward the ground. Ensure your posture is nice and tall.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Get down on both knees and place one foot forward in a lunge position.
- Reach behind you and take hold of your foot. Pull it up toward your hip. If needed, hold on to a stable object to help with balance.
- Take your weight down and forward, keeping your posture nice and tall.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Straddling the ball, place your shin and knee on top of the ball.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend your front knee and lower your body toward the ground.
- Push your knee and shin into the ball as you lower your hip flexor down.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Straddling the ball, place your shin and knee on top of the ball.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bend your front knee and lower your body toward the ground.
- Push your knee and shin into the ball as you lower your hip flexor down.
- Grab your foot and slowly pull your foot up toward your butt.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Place your left leg forward into a lunge position.
- Keeping your right leg straight and your left knee above your heel, lean forward at the hips and place your left hand on the inside of your left foot.
- Pushing your left elbow into your knee, turn your body, and reach to the sky with your right arm.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Standing with your feet together, place one leg forward, and slowly begin to slide your feet further apart.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, move down into a slide split position. Stabilize yourself with your hands if needed.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- In a standing position, grab a foot and pull it up to your rear end.
- Keeping hold of your foot, slowly lean forward and touch your hand to the floor.
- Keep your posture nice and tall.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Standing with both feet together, bring your foot up behind you and place a strap around your foot.
- Holding onto the strap, bring your hands above your head and pull up and in on your foot.
- With your posture nice and tall and a slight arch in your body, look up toward the ceiling.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Place the T-Stretch strap around your ankle and place the strap over your shoulder.
- Keeping your base leg straight, lean your body forward to a 90-degree angle from your leg as you pull your heel to your rear end.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Get down on both knees.
- Place your hands on the floor behind you and slowly lower your back to the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**
- This stretch can place a tremendous amount of pressure on the knees.

HIPS AND LOWER BACK

Unfortunately, mobility of the hip is a problem that most individuals will deal with at some point in their lives. When talking about the hip, I am referring to some of the most powerful muscles in the human body—a group of muscles that are responsible for running, jumping, and walking. I grouped the stretches for your hips and lower back together because they work hand in hand with each other. Some common problems with tight muscles in these two areas are:

- Arthritic pain
- Lower back pain
- Hamstring pain
- Sciatica (pain in your sciatic nerve that can be caused by a tight piriformis)
- Knee pain
- Poor balance
- Poor posture



- Lying on your back, bend both of your knees.
- Keeping that same angle in your knee, raise your foot off the table.
- Try to press your lower back into the floor/bed (pelvic tilt) as you raise your foot.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lie on your back.
- Pull your knees up to your chest.
- Grasp your knees with your hands or arms and slowly pull them into your chest.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Recommended after any type of rotational stretch. **(Anyone)**



- Lie on your back.
- Pull one knee up toward your chest.
- Grasp your knee and pull it in slowly toward the chest.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lie on your back.
- Pull both knees up toward your chest.
- Grasping your knees with your hands, pull your knees in toward your chest and out away from each other.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lie on your back.
- Pull both knees up toward your chest.
- Place the inside edges of your feet together.
- Grasp the outside of your feet and pull in toward your chest.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lie on your back.
- Place your right ankle on your left knee.
- Rest your knee down to the table.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lie on your back with both knees bent.
- Place your right ankle on your left knee.
- Using your left hand, grasp your right knee and pull your knee down toward your chest.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a seated position, place your right ankle on your left knee.
- Sitting in a nice and tall position, slowly push your knee down.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a seated position, place your right ankle on your left knee.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly lean forward at the hips.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a seated position, place your left ankle on your right knee.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly rotate your upper body to the left.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lie on your side with your legs together.
- Prop yourself up on your elbow, placing the elbow under your shoulder.
- Support yourself with your other arm.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Standing an arm's length away from a wall, place your hand on the wall at shoulder height.
- With your feet together, lean your hips in toward the wall.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lie on your back, place your left ankle on your right knee.
- Pull your right foot in and lay the outside your right knee down on the floor.
- Continue to pull your right knee and foot in until you feel a stretch.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your back, place your leg straight out on top of a therapy ball.
- Place your ankle just above your knee.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Repeat on the other side. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your back, place your leg straight out on top of the ball.
- Place your ankle just above your knee.
- Slowly bend your knee and pull the ball in toward your body until you feel a stretch.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your back, have your partner take hold of your leg, placing one hand on the side of your knee and the other hand on your ankle.
- Keeping your leg at a 90-degree angle, have your partner GENTLY push your knee toward your chest.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Communicate with your partner, letting him/her know when you feel the stretch. **(Anyone)**



- In a seated position, bend one leg and place it behind you and bend your forward leg to a 90-degree angle.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, lean forward toward your knee.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Begin this stretch on your hands and knees.
- Rotate your hips and lower them toward the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your back with both knees bent.
- Place your right ankle on your left knee.
- Take your right arm through your legs and grasp your knee. Take your left hand and place it on your right hand, interlocking your fingers.
- Pull your left knee toward your chest, feeling this stretch in your right hip.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- From a seated position, bend your knee with your foot behind you.
- Bend your opposite leg in front of you and place your foot against the other knee.
- Keeping your posture tall, bend forward at your hips.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- This is a great stretch because you can lean forward in different directions and stretch different muscles in the hip. **(Intermediate)**



- From a seated position, bend one knee and place it behind you.
- Bend your opposite knee and place your foot against your leg.
- Keeping your posture tall, rotate your body toward your front leg.
- Lean into your leg and place both hands on the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- From a seated position, bend one knee and place it behind you. Bend your opposite knee and place your foot against your leg.
- Keeping your posture tall, rotate your body toward your front leg and place your back hand on the floor.
- Keeping your chest up, reach your forward arm over your head, extending your arm.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- From a seated position, bend one knee and place it behind you. Bend your opposite knee and place your foot against your leg.
- Keeping your posture tall, rotate your body toward your front leg and place your back elbow on the floor.
- Keeping your chest up, reach your forward arm over your head, extending your arm.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- From a seated position, bend one knee and place it behind you. Bend your opposite knee and place your foot against your leg.
- Keeping your posture tall, rotate your body toward your front leg and place both elbows on the floor.
- Keep your posture nice and tall.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your side, bend your top leg and place it at a 90-degree angle.
- Slowly push your top shoulder back to the ground, holding your upper knee down to the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your side (close to the edge of a bed or table), bend your top leg to a 90-degree angle so the top leg hangs off the table.
- Slowly push your top shoulder back to the bed or table while holding your upper knee down.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place a T-Stretch strap around your left foot and lie on your right side.
- Holding the strap, keep your left leg straight.
- Slowly push your left shoulder back on the floor/bed and pull your left leg up toward your head.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your side with your legs together.
- Prop yourself up on your hand, placing your hand under your shoulder.
- Support yourself with your other arm.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Stand with your feet together and your posture nice and tall.
- Cross one leg in front of the other.
- Raise your arms high above your head and lean to the side where your foot is crossed.
- Keep your posture nice and tall and pointed forward. Try not to turn your body. Reach as high as you can.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Stand approximately elbow length away from the wall.
- Take the leg closest to the wall and cross it behind you. Slide it away from the wall as you slowly lower down toward the ground. Do not let your forward knee get past your toes.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Sitting on a therapy ball, place your ankle on your knee.
- Keep your posture nice and tall, focusing on balance.
- Let your knee relax down toward the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Sitting on a therapy ball, place your ankle on your knee.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, lean forward. Focus on your balance.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Sitting on a therapy ball, place your ankle on your knee.
- Place the opposite hand on the back of your head. Keeping your posture nice and tall, rotate your elbow down toward your knee.
- Focus on your balance.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper balance. **(Advanced)**

LOWER BACK AND ABS

I am sure you have heard that exercising and making our abdominals strong will help ease lower back pain, which is true; however, *tight* abdominal muscles can also cause some serious problems. When these muscles are ignored and get tight, they can actually place pressure on the organs in our body, forcing them to move up in our thoracic cavity. I, unfortunately, have dealt with this issue myself. It actually started affecting my breathing and gave me tremendous abdominal pain. Now, many of these stretches have become my favorites. Other problems that can arise are:

- Lower back pain
- Mid-/upper back pain
- Poor digestion
- Cramping
- Chest pain
- Menstrual pain
- Hernias



- Lie on your stomach.
- Place your elbows underneath your shoulders and rise up. Look straight ahead.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Be warned, this stretch can place strain on the lower back.

(Anyone)



- Get on your hands and knees.
- Breathing out, let your chest and stomach sink down to the ground as you raise your head up.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Combine this stretch with the stretch below for a great functional movement for the spine. **(Anyone)**



- Get on your hands and knees.
- Breathing in, arch your back as high as it will comfortably allow. Lower your head down toward the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Combine this stretch with the stretch above for a great functional movement for the spine. **(Anyone)**



- In a seated position, slightly bend both knees.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly reach forward.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**
- In a seated position, slightly bend both knees.
- Keeping your posture tall, slowly reach

forward.

- Lower your arms, letting your head sink down between your knees. Slide your hands even further forward if you are able.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Position yourself on your hands and knees.
- Sit back into your heels and push your chest down to the floor. Ensure your arms are reaching out over your head.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Position yourself on your hands and knees.
- Sit back into your heels and push your chest down to the floor. Ensure your arms are reaching out over your head.
- Slowly reach both arms to the side.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your back, place your feet on top of a therapy ball.
- Use your feet to turn the ball to the side, rotating your legs to the side as well.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- For traction, do this with shoes on or with bare feet. To get a better stretch, try placing your feet further to the side of the ball from the starting position. **(Anyone)**



- Standing up, place one hand behind your head.
- Holding a weight in your other hand, bend to the side. Keep your posture nice and tall and ensure the hand holding the weight stays up against your body and slides down the side of your leg. Don't bend forward.
- Feet can be together or, if you need more balance, shoulder-width apart.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
(Anyone)



- Stand with your feet approximately shoulder-width apart.
- Carefully place and hold a pole of some sort on your upper back and shoulders.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, rotate your upper body to the side.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Sitting in a chair, roll up a bath towel and place it at various positions along your back.
- Keep your posture nice and tall, while sitting normally. Don't push your back into the towel.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Sitting in a chair, roll up a bath towel and place it at your mid-back.
- Place your hands on the back of your head.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly arch back into the towel.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Stand with your feet approximately shoulder-width apart.
- Interlock your fingers and raise your arms over your head.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, lean to the side and focus on pushing the palms of your hands up and out away from your body.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Stand with your feet approximately shoulder-width apart.
- Holding on to a therapy ball, extend your arms over your head.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, lean to the side and focus on pushing the ball up and away from your body.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Place a therapy ball against the wall.
- Position the ball so that you are resting your lower to mid-back against the ball.
- With your hands stretched up above your head or hands behind your head, lean back against the ball. I tell my clients to try to take the shape of the ball.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Sit in a chair with your feet and knees together.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly lower to the floor. Place your hands on each side of your feet.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Sit in a chair with your feet and knees wider than shoulder-width.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly lower to the floor in between your knees and feet.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Get on your hands and knees.
- Take one arm and rotate your body. Reach as high as you can. Look in the direction of your arm.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Sit in a chair or on the end of your bed.
- Keeping your posture tall, rotate your body to the side. You can use the arm of the chair or the cushion to help you rotate a little more.
- Relax and hold the position, ensuring proper breathing.
(Intermediate)



- In a seated position, place your hands behind your head.
- Spread your legs shoulder-width apart.
- Rotate and take your left elbow to your right knee.
- Relax and hold each position, ensuring proper breathing.
(Intermediate)



- Begin by sitting on a therapy ball. Slowly roll yourself down into a lying position.
- Position yourself so that your mid-back is centered on the ball. Keep your knees bent for better support.
- Extend your arms over your head or place them behind your head and slowly relax your body to take the shape of the ball.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your stomach.
 - Place your hands underneath your shoulders and rise up. Look straight ahead.
 - Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
 - This stretch can place a tremendous amount of stress on the lower back.
- (Intermediate)**



- Lie with your stomach on a therapy ball.
- Let your body sink down and take the shape of the ball. You can also place your feet against the wall for more stability.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Lay your side on a therapy ball with your hand and feet on the floor for stability.
- Stretch your upper arm out above your head.
- Slowly lower your upper body, taking the shape of the ball.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Begin this position on your knees.
- Straighten one leg and place it out to the side with your toes pointed up.
- Raise your hands above your head and bend to the side of the straightened leg.
- Keep your posture nice and tall and reach as far as you can.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Begin by sitting on a therapy ball. Slowly roll yourself down into a lying position.
- Position yourself so that your mid-back is centered on the ball.
- Keeping your legs straight, extend your arms over your head or place them behind your head and slowly relax your body to take the shape of the ball.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**



- Lie on your stomach, situated so your body hangs off the side of a table/bed, bending you at your waist.
- Have your partner tightly hold your legs down while you slightly support yourself with your hands on the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**

UPPER BACK

Most of our daily activities are responsible for the aches and pains we feel throughout the week. Whether your job is sitting at a desk behind a computer or a dentist having to position yourself to look in someone's mouth, our actions cause consequences in our body. Due to these daily actions, we tend to develop poor posture, which can lead to upper back pain and discomfort. Tightness in these muscles can make it very difficult to do things that we all take for granted, like raising our hands above our head or even moving our neck. Other issues that may arise are:

- Arthritic pain
- Neck pain
- Shoulder impingement
- Bursitis (inflammation of a bursa, which is a fluid-filled sac that decreases friction in your joints)
- Tingling in your arms
- Frozen shoulder



- In a standing or seated position, cross your arms and give yourself a big hug.
- Round your shoulders forward and lower your head to your chest while you pull forward on your back with your hands.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Start this stretch from your hands and knees.
- Keeping one arm straight, slide your other arm under your body and lower your shoulder to the ground. Reach with the arm on the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Placing your palm down will intensify the stretch. **(Anyone)**



- Begin by standing with your side approximately one foot away from a door jamb or a secure post.
- With your feet shoulder-width apart, grasp a door jamb or secure post with both hands (thumbs should point toward each other).
- Place the closest hand on the top about head height and the lower hand even with the lower portion of your chest.
- Making sure your hips are pointed forward, pull with your lower arm, and push with your upper arm.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing or seated position, interlock your fingers.
- Extend your arms straight out in front of you with your palms facing out.
- Let your shoulders round forward.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- While on your knees, place your arms straight out with your palms down on a therapy ball.
- Keeping your arms straight, slowly lower your chest to the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- While on your knees, place your arms straight out with your palms down on a therapy ball.
- With your arms straight, slowly lower your chest to the ground and rotate the ball to the side.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. Repeat on the other side.
(Anyone)



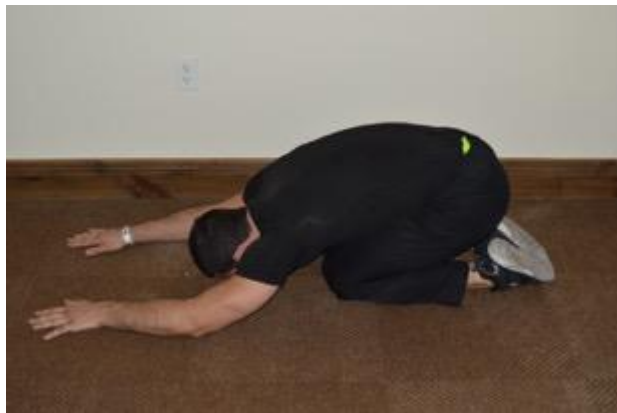
- While on your knees, place your arms straight out with your palms down on a therapy ball.
- With your arms straight, slowly rise up, rounding your upper back and lowering your head.
- Reach your arms out as far as you can.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- While on your knees, place your right arm slightly out on an angle with your thumb up.
- Slowly lower your right shoulder down toward the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Take hold of a secure object. Stand close enough that your arms have a slight bend.
- Slowly move your chest toward the ground while pushing your rear end back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- On your hands and knees, lower your rear end to your heels.
- Reach your hands out above your head and push your chest to the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- On your hands and knees, slide your hands slightly in front of your head.
- Slowly move your chest down toward the ground, keeping your hips up.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- From your knees, place your hands and forearms on the seat of a chair.
- Slowly move your chest down toward the ground keeping your hips up.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- From a seated position on the floor, spread your legs and place your hand on the floor to the side and behind you.
- Leaning on your hand, reach the other arm up over your head.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- From a kneeling position, bend one leg and place your foot out to the side.
- Reach your opposite side arm up and over your head and slowly lean toward your knee.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Keep your posture nice and tall from either a standing or sitting position.
- Pull your elbow over your head.
- Grab your elbow and pull back. Slowly lean your upper body to the side.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Keep your posture nice and tall from either a standing or sitting position.
- Reach across your body with your arm.
- With the other hand, grab the back of your arm.
- Pull your arm slightly out toward the other side of your body.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Keep your posture nice and tall from either a standing or sitting position.
- Interlock your fingers and place them on the back of your head.
- Slowly pull your head down.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- If you slowly move your elbows forward and slightly round your shoulders, you will feel the stretch moving down from your neck into your upper back. **(Anyone)**



- With one hand, hold on to a door jamb or a pole. The pole or door jamb should be straight in front of you. Your thumb should be on top.
- Slowly lower your body down (squat down) and away from your hand.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Stand with a pole or door jamb off-center.
- With the arm furthest away, reach across your body and grab hold of the pole. Your thumb should be on the bottom.
- Slowly lower your body down into a squat position.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.

(Intermediate)



- Stand in front of a pole with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Grab a secure post approximately at chest level. Stand just close enough to have your arms slightly bent.
- Keeping a firm hold on the pole, squat down, keeping your knees above your heels.
- Slightly leaning back and looking down toward the ground will intensify the stretch.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.

(Intermediate)



- Stand or sit, keeping your posture nice and tall.
- Reach your arms straight out in front of you, crossing them at your elbows.
- Bend both arms and place the palms of your hands together.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.

(Intermediate)



- Hold onto a bar overhead.
- Move your feet forward so your arms are slightly behind you.
- Place your weight on your heels and lean back into the stretch.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.

(Intermediate)



- Hold onto a bar overhead.
- Move your feet backward so your arms are reaching forward.
- Place your weight on your toes and lean forward into the stretch.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.

(Intermediate)

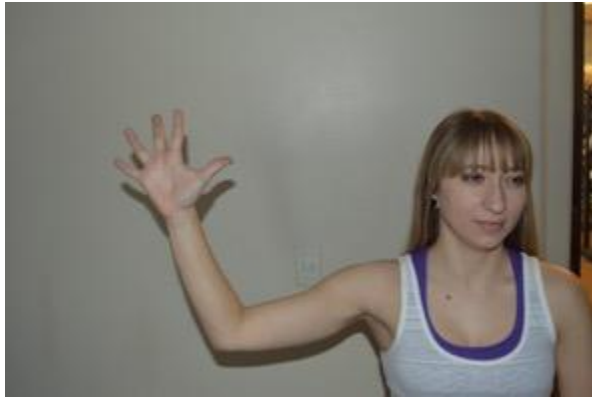


- Lie on your back.
- Bring your feet up and over your head, resting them on the floor.
- Keep your arms on the floor to give yourself more balance.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**

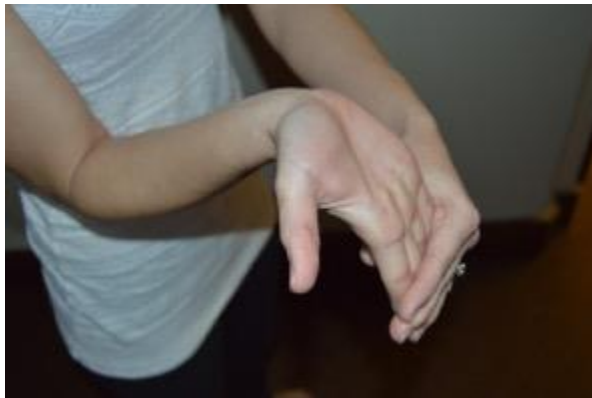
HANDS AND FOREARMS

Tightness in the hands and forearms typically occurs from overuse of these muscles. Activities such as typing, sewing, and golfing can create tightness of these muscles. These symptoms definitely need to be treated; however, keep in mind that many problems can also be associated with tightness in your shoulders, neck, chest, and even in the upper back. Problems often associated with tightness in your hands and forearms are:

- Arthritic pain
- Carpal tunnel
- Hand weakness
- Golfer's elbow
- Tingling
- Pain



- Open your hands and spread your fingers as far apart from each other as you can.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Keeping your elbow bent and palm up, open your hand and keep your fingers together.
- Use your other hand to slowly pull back on your fingers.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



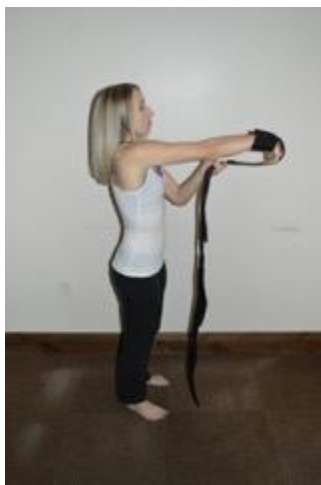
- Keeping your arm straight out in front of you, open your hand and keep your fingers together and pointing upward.
- Use your other hand to slowly pull back on your fingers.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Keeping your arm straight out in front of you, open your hand and keep your fingers together and pointing downward.
- Use your other hand to slowly pull back on the back of your hand.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Place the T-Stretch strap around your wrist. Extend the strap down the palm of your hand and over your fingertips.
- Using your other hand, gently pull the strap toward you. This will pull your fingers in toward your body.
- Use caution when doing this stretch. It can place pressure on your elbow, wrist, and fingers.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Place the strap around your wrist, extending the strap over the back of your hand and over your fingertips.
- Using your other hand, gently pull the strap toward you. This again will pull your fingers in toward your body and stretch your upper forearm.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Place the palms of your hands together.
- Slowly raise your elbows, keeping your palms together.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Get on your hands and knees.
- Place your hands flat on the floor with your fingers pointed forward.
- Keeping the palms of your hands down on the floor, slowly move your body forward.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Get on your hands and knees.
- Place your hands flat on the floor with your fingers pointed backward.
- Keeping the palms of your hands down on the floor, slowly move your body backward.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**

ARMS, SHOULDER, AND CHEST

Our daily activities play such an enormous role in our posture and, of course, our overall flexibility. The muscles in our arms, shoulders, and chest are all connected and, typically, if one area is tight, so are the others. In order to relieve pain and tightness in one area, you need to stretch the other muscle groups as well. Tightness in this area can create chest pain and tingling in the hands, as well as:

- Shoulder impingement
- Frozen shoulder
- Bursitis and tendonitis
- Golfer's elbow
- Arthritic pain
- Poor posture



- Start by standing in a doorway. Bend your elbows to a 90-degree angle.
- Place your hands and elbows on each side of the doorway. I try to keep my elbows up at shoulder height. Changing the height will change the angle of the stretch.
- Place one leg forward through the doorway.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly lean your body forward into the stretch.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Start by standing in a doorway. Straighten your arms and place them on each side of the doorway, approximately at shoulder height. Moving your hands up or down the doorway will change the angle of the stretch, so don't be afraid to experiment with your arm angle to feel what works best for you.
- Place one leg forward through the doorway.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly lean your body forward into the stretch.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing position, place your arm against a doorway or other stable column.
- Place the leg of the side you are stretching forward.
- Keeping your elbow up at your shoulder height and your posture nice and tall, slowly lean forward and turn your body the opposite direction.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Turning your head the other direction will help to slightly intensify the stretch and you will add another great stretch for your neck. **(Anyone)**



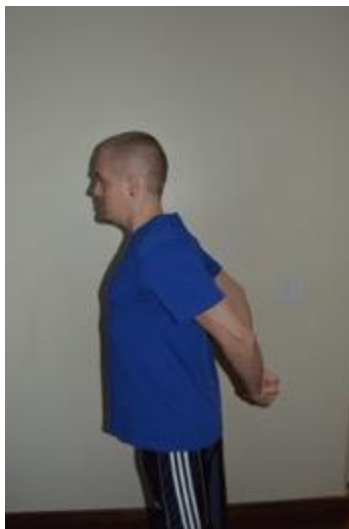
- In a standing position, place your hand against a doorway or other stable column.
- Place the leg of the side you are stretching forward.
- Keeping your hand above shoulder height and your posture nice and tall, slowly lean forward and turn your body the opposite direction.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- This is a great stretch for your chest but can also stretch down the bicep and into the forearm. **(Anyone)**



- Face a wall in a standing position.
- Place your hand, elbow, and shoulder against the wall.
- Move the opposite foot slightly away from the wall, and place your opposite palm on the wall.
- Keeping your hand, elbow, and shoulder against the wall, slowly turn your opposite shoulder away from the wall.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing or seated position, place both hands behind your head.
- Keeping your posture tall, slowly push your elbows back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing position, take hold of your hands behind your back.
- Keeping your posture tall and looking forward, slowly push your hands back, away from your body. Think of pushing your chest out.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Using a cable crossover machine, place both pulleys above head height.
- Take both handles and move slightly forward until you feel tension.
- Keeping your posture tall, lean your body forward, sticking your chest out.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- From your hands and knees, place your elbow on a therapy ball, keeping your arm at a 90-degree angle.
- Slowly lower the same shoulder down toward the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- From your hands and knees, place your straightened arm on a therapy ball.
- Slowly lower the same shoulder down toward the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing position, have your partner hold underneath your bent arms with their hands on your back.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, have your partner slowly squeeze your arms together.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Communicate with your partner, letting him/her know when you are feeling the stretch. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing position, have your partner hold your wrists with your arms straight behind you.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, have your partner slowly raise and squeeze your arms together.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Communicate with your partner, letting him/ her know when you are feeling the

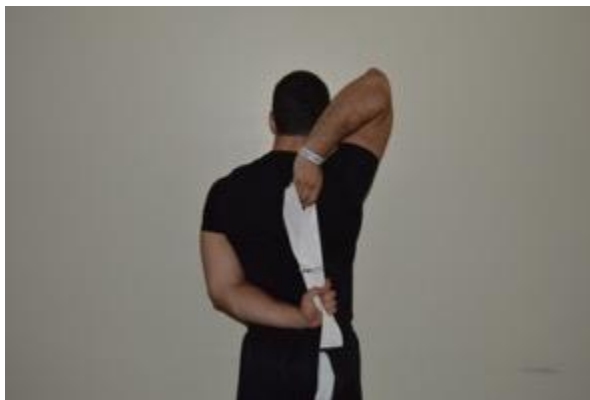
stretch. **(Anyone)**



- Grab onto a fixed object behind you that is approximately shoulder height.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly move forward, stretching your arm behind you.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- The cable crossover machine in the weight room is a great machine to use for this stretch. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing or seated position, raise your arm over your head, bending at your elbow.
- Take your other hand and grab your elbow.
- Slowly pull your elbow back behind your head.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Holding a T-Stretch strap in your hand, raise your arm over your head and bend it at your elbow. The strap should be hanging straight down behind your back.
- Grab the strap with your other hand behind your back.
- Slowly pull the band down.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your side, bring your arm out to a 90-degree angle. Bend your elbow and wrist also to a 90-degree angle.
- Looking straight down, place your chin on your shoulder.
- Using your other hand, grab your wrist and gently push your elbow down into the ground. Slowly push your hand down toward the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your stomach, place your arm straight out to the side.
- Place the palm of your opposite arm under your shoulder (push up position).
- Slowly push your hand into the ground and raise your opposite shoulder off the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- While on your knees, place both arms straight out on a therapy ball with your thumbs up.
- Bend both arms, keeping your elbows pressed against the ball.
- Slowly push your chest down toward the ground.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Holding very light hand weights (3-5 pounds), lie on a bench on your back.
- Straighten your arms out to the side, palms up, and let your hands relax down toward the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- In a seated position, bend your knees and place your arms behind you.
- Slightly raise your rear end off the ground and slowly move toward your feet until you feel a stretch.
- Lower your rear end to the floor, keeping your back straight. Don't let your chest sink down.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Hold an elastic band or strap straight out in front of you.
- Slowly raise your arms up over your head and behind your back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- A couple notes on this stretch: The width of your hand position on the band is going to depend on your flexibility. Always start with your hands further apart and move them in if you have to. The other thing you can do with this stretch is to continuously move your arms and hands back and forth over your head. **(Intermediate)**



- Wrap a strap around a pole.
- In a standing position, take hold of the strap with your back to the pole. Keep your arms straight out to the side.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, place one foot forward, and slowly move forward into the stretch. The strap should pull your hands and arms back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.

(Intermediate)



- From a standing or sitting position, interlock your hands and place them behind your head.
- Have your partner take hold of both elbows and slowly pull back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Communicate with your partner, letting him/her know when you are feeling the stretch. **(Intermediate)**



- In a seated position on the floor, interlock your hands and place them behind your head.
- Your partner will place his/her forearms over your arms and place their hands on your back.
- Have your partner slowly pull back on your arms while pushing forward on your back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Communicate with your partner, letting him/her know when you are feeling the stretch. **(Intermediate)**



- Reach your arms above your head from a seated position on the floor.
- Have your partner place his/her arms over yours and place their hands on your back, over your shoulder blades.
- Your partner will slowly lean back while pushing your back forward.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Communicate with your partner, letting

him/her know when you are feeling the stretch. **(Intermediate)**



- Sitting on the ground, place your left leg straight out in front of you with your right leg bent and the bottom of your right foot against your left leg.
- Place your right hand on the back of your head with your left hand on your right knee.
- Have your partner kneel down with his/her left knee pushing slightly against your back.
- Your partner will place his/her right hand on the

hand that is on your knee and his/her left hand on your elbow.

- Have your partner slowly push your elbow, causing you to lean to the side while pushing down on your knee.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Repeat on the other side.
- Communicate with your partner, letting him/her know when you feel the stretch.

(Intermediate)



- In a standing or seated position, place your arm behind your back.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, use your other hand and pull your arm across your back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place your arm behind your back.
- Place your other arm over your head with your elbow bent, holding a strap in your hand.
- Grab hold of the strap behind your back and slowly pull your arm up your back.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Place one arm behind your back, and one arm bent over your head.
- Interlock your fingers and slowly pull your hands together.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Advanced)**

NECK

Tightness in the neck can be the result of sleeping in an awkward position, some sort of trauma to the neck, like a car accident, or even poor posture while sitting behind a computer at your job all day. It can create problems such as headaches and shoulder pain, as well as:

- Arthritic pain
- Dizziness
- Sinus problems
- Inability to turn your head
- Jaw pain
- Tearing of eyes



- From a standing or seated position, interlock your hands behind your head.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, slowly pull your head down.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



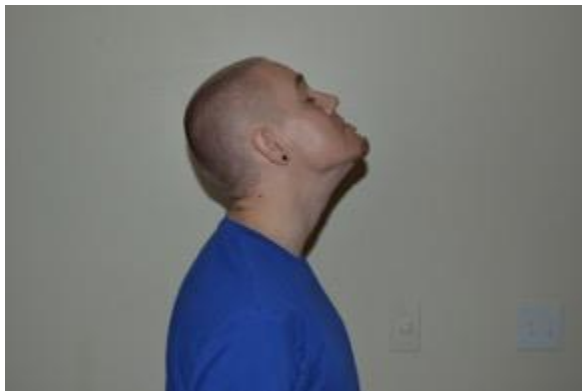
- In a standing or seated position, place your hand over the top of your head, grabbing the side of your head.
- Slowly pull your head to the side.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing or seated position, place your arm behind your back.
- Slowly lean your head to the other side until the stretch is felt.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing position, hold a weight or some sort of stationary object like a table. The idea is to keep your shoulder down.
- With the other hand, slowly pull the side of your head toward the floor.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing or seated position, lean your head back.
- Extend your lower jaw forward. Think of moving your lower teeth past your upper teeth.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing or seated position, rotate your head to the side.
- Keep your posture nice and tall, and move your head slightly back to add a little more intensity.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your back, center a hand towel, folded lengthwise, under your head.
 - Your partner will grab the towel on both ends and slightly raise your head off the table or floor.
 - Your partner will then slowly raise one end of the towel, turning your head to the side.
 - Relax and hold the stretch, then rotate to the other side. Ensure proper breathing.
- (Anyone)**



- Lie on your stomach on a massage table or bed.
- Position your shoulders at the edge, so you are far enough up so your head is allowed to hang freely.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Due to blood rushing to your head, get up slowly, you may get a little dizzy. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your back on a massage table or bed.
- Position your shoulders at the edge, so you are far enough up so your head is allowed to hang back freely.
- Relax and hold the stretch, ensuring proper breathing.
- Due to blood rushing to your head, get up slowly, you may get a little dizzy. **(Intermediate)**

DYNAMIC STRETCHES

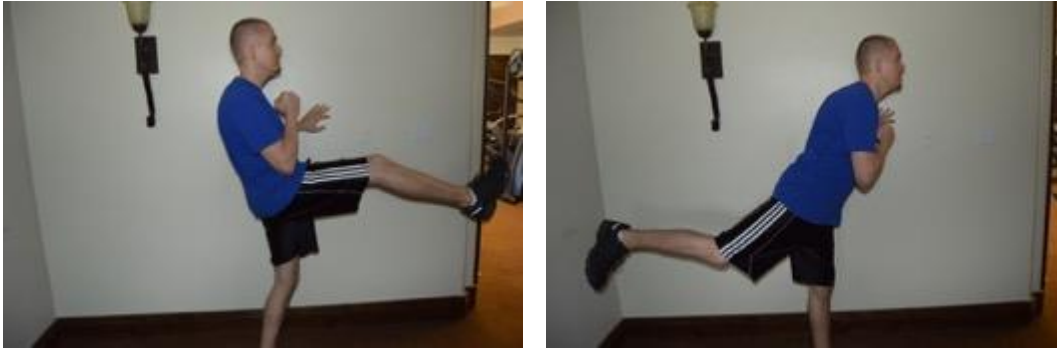
Ex-MLB All-Star Erik Hanson mentioned something to me that I like to share with all my clients. He told me that when he was pitching, he warmed up to throw; he didn't throw to warm up. The same thing goes with his amateur golfing career—he warms up to hit balls; he doesn't hit balls to warm up. I witness Erik performing many dynamic stretches every day he plays golf. I placed these stretches in a category all by themselves primarily because they typically involve stretching and using more than one muscle group. They involve active movements that are not only sport specific, but everyday life specific movements that we do every day...or should. I encourage you to add these to your daily routine, but move slowly and hold on to something for stability if needed. Dynamic stretches are a perfect addition to any warm-up or exercise program, but, as with anything, there are several things to keep in mind:

- Perform a 5-10 minute aerobic workout prior to your dynamic stretches.
- Use a foam roller to help release adhesions in the muscles.
- Perform each exercise 10-15 times.
- Ensure proper body posture.
- Perform the dynamic stretches that most closely resemble your daily activities.
- Slowly increase your speed and range of motion as you progress.
- Focus on your breathing.



- Keeping your hands up, stand with one foot back with toes pointed forward.
- Your weight should transfer totally to your front foot as you begin to move your back knee forward.
- Staying under control, raise your back knee as high as you can.
- You should feel a slight stretch (in the hip and possibly even in the hamstrings closer to your glutes if you are tighter) within the leg lifted off the ground.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times.

- Hold on to something stable for balance and support if needed. **(Anyone)**



- Standing next to something stable for support and balance, swing your leg forward to get a stretch in your hamstring.
- Immediately swing your leg back behind you, stretching your hip flexors.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat this stretch 10-15 times with each leg.
- Hold on to something stable for support and balance if needed. **(Anyone)**



- Hold on to a stable object for support and balance.
- Standing approximately 2-3 feet away from support, bring one leg forward.
- Swing your leg across your body and out to the side, safely trying to get as much movement in your hip as possible. You will feel this on the inside of your leg as well as in your glutes.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat this stretch 10-15 times. **(Anyone)**



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart with the palms of your hands together out in front of you (like a golf stance).
- Keeping your arms straight, slowly turn to the right side, bringing your right arm behind and above your head. Keep your left arm in the starting position.
- Return to the starting position and repeat to the left side.
- I like to do this stretch in a constant motion, performing 10-15 repetitions. I then hold the position of the last stretch on each side. **(Anyone)**



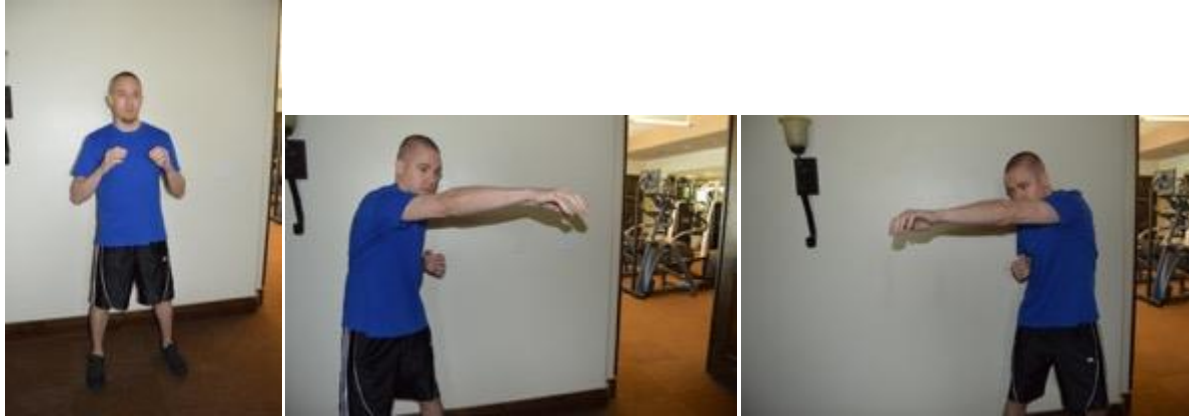
- Keeping your posture tall in a standing or seated position, lift your arms straight out to the sides.
- Begin doing forward circles with your arms. Perform 15-20 circles, and then do backward circles 15-20 repetitions.
- I also like to change the size of the circles from time to time. **(Anyone)**



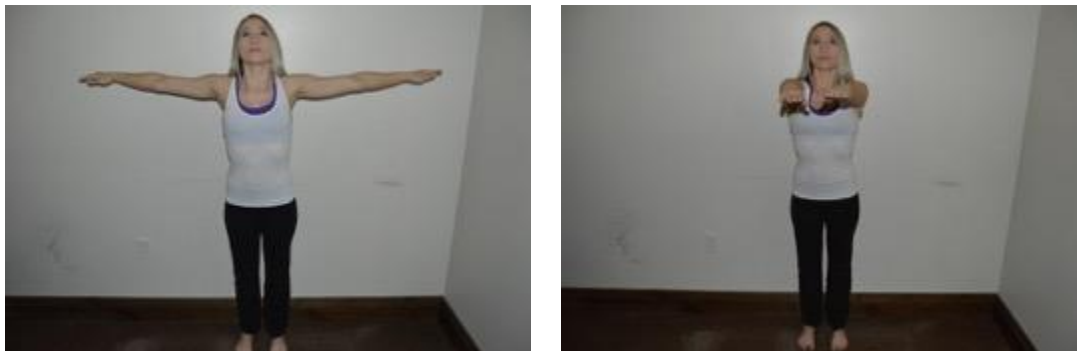
- Stand with your feet approximately shoulder-width apart.
- Turn your body and, with your left hand, reach as far as you can to your right side, then immediately turn back and reach with your right hand as far as you can to your left side.
- This stretch can be felt all the way down the side of your reaching arm and down into the lower back.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times on each side. **(Anyone)**



- Start with your feet together and both hands up with your elbows at shoulder height.
- Step out past shoulder-width with your left foot and raise your left arm high above your head. Return to the starting position and repeat on your right side, each time ensuring you are reaching as high into the sky as you possibly can. Don't get lazy.
- You should feel this stretch all the way down the side of your outstretched arm.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times on each side. **(Anyone)**



- Keeping your hands up, start with your feet approximately shoulder-width apart.
- Rotate your body and push your hand straight out in front, really trying to reach as far as you can in front of your body. I always tell my clients to visualize something they need to grab and then pull it back in. Repeat on the other side.
- This stretch should be felt in the side of the outreached arm and down into the lower back.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times on each side. **(Anyone)**



- In a standing or seated position, place your arms at shoulder height.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, bring your hands in together and then right back out.
- Move slowly as you begin, adding just a little more speed as you warm up. When doing this stretch, I focus on separating my shoulder blades when my hands are in front and squeezing my shoulder blades together as I bring my hands back.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times. **(Anyone)**



- Start with your feet a little wider than shoulder-width apart.
- Slightly squat down and place your hands on your knees.
- Slowly turn your right shoulder in toward your left knee as you slightly push your right knee out. Repeat to the other side.
- You should feel this stretch in between your shoulder blades and down the center of your back. People who are tight may also feel this in the groin.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times on each side. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your back, bend your knees and place your feet flat on the floor/bed.
- Slowly move your knees to the side, keeping them together until you feel the stretch.
- Return to the starting position and repeat on the other side.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 15-20 times each direction.
- This stretch is great for individuals with arthritic hips. It can also be a great move for people with lower back issues. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your back, bend your knees and place your feet flat on the floor/bed.
- Place something between your knees like a pillow or ball. Squeezing the object, slowly move your knees to the side until you feel the stretch.
- Return to the starting position and repeat on the other side.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 15-20 times in each direction. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your back, place your legs on top of a therapy ball.
- Slowly rotate the ball to the side until you feel the stretch.
- Move back to the starting position and repeat the stretch to the other side.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat the stretch 15-20 times in each direction. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your back, place your heels near the center of a therapy ball.
- Bending your knees, slowly pull the ball in toward your rear end until you feel the stretch.
- Move the ball back to the starting position and repeat.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat the stretch 15-20 times. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your back, bend your knees and place your feet flat on the floor/bed.
- Slowly spread your knees apart from each other until the stretch is felt.
- Return to the starting position and repeat the stretch.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat the stretch 10-15 times.
- This dynamic stretch is great for the muscles in the inner leg. It is also another great move to do for arthritic hips as well as lower back pain. **(Anyone)**



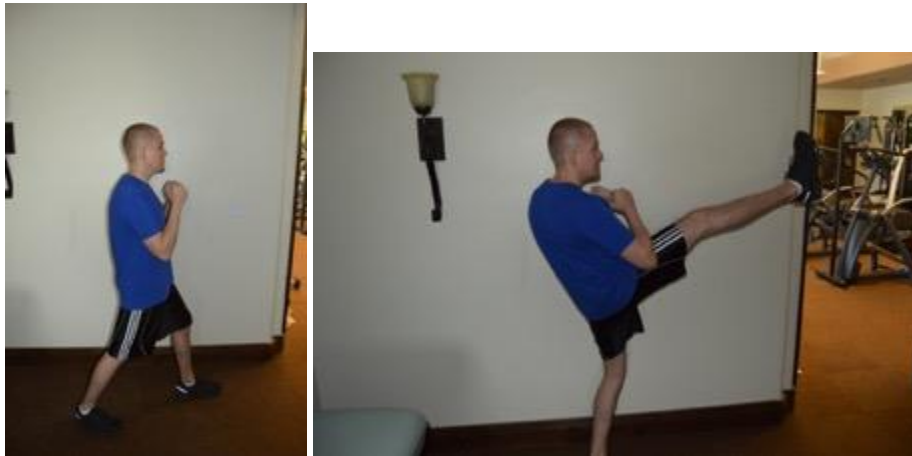
- In a standing position, place a folded hand towel between your knees and hold it there.
- Hold on to a stationary object for balance!
- Slowly raise your foot up behind you, keeping the towel between your knees. Return your foot back to the floor.
- Repeat 10-15 times.
- Relax and ensure proper breathing throughout the entire movement. **(Anyone)**



- Lying on your back, bend both knees.
- Slowly raise your knee up, keeping the same angle in your leg.
- Repeat 10-15 times.
- Relax and maintain proper breathing throughout the entire movement. **(Anyone)**



- Stand with one foot behind you, keeping your hands up.
- Bring your back leg up and to the opposite side.
- Fan your knee up and across your body, then back to the starting position.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times with each leg. **(Intermediate)**



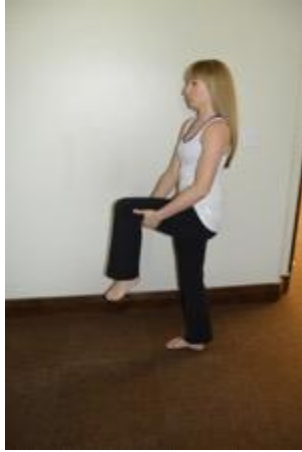
- With both hands up, stand with one foot back with toes pointed forward.
- Your weight will begin to move to your forward foot as your back leg kicks forward and up.
- This stretch allows you to stand in place as you focus on bringing your foot back to the starting position, or you can do this moving forward. As you do your front kick, bring the leg straight down in front of you and repeat the front kick with your other leg.
- You will feel this stretch in the hamstrings of your kicking leg.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat this stretch 10-15 times with each leg.
- Hold on to something stable for support and balance if needed. **(Intermediate)**



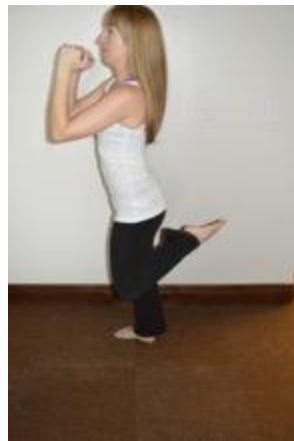
- With both hands up, stand with both feet together.
- When raising your right leg, start by placing your weight on your left foot. Staying under control, raise your leg up to the side as high as you can get it. Slowly lower your leg back to the starting position.
- You will feel this stretch again in your hip as well as the inside of your leg and your groin muscles.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat this stretch 10-15 times. **(Intermediate)**



- Get down on your hands and knees, spreading your knees as far apart as you can with your feet remaining on the floor. You should feel a little stretch on the inside of your legs.
- Lean forward and rotate your right leg on your knee, bringing your foot off the floor, stretching your hip.
- As you return your right leg back to the starting position, rotate your left leg up.
- Repeat this stretch 10-15 times in each direction. **(Intermediate)**



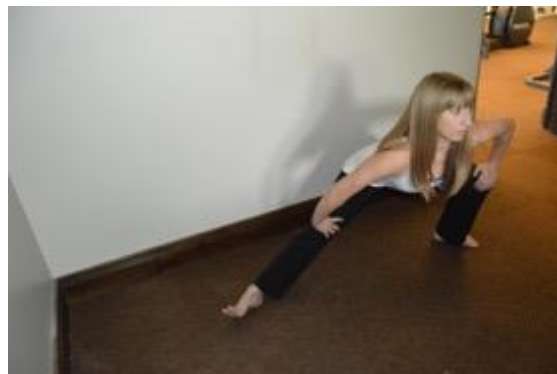
- Begin by standing with your feet together. Raise one leg and grasp with both hands under your leg, just above the knee. Try to keep your knee approximately at belt level.
- Ensuring proper balance, straighten your leg.
- You will feel this stretch on the back of your leg in your hamstrings. You will also begin to feel the muscles in your thigh working as well.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat the stretch 10-15 times. **(Intermediate)**



- Keeping your hands up, stand with your feet approximately 6 inches apart.
- Raise your leg off the ground and attempt to hit your rear end with your heel. Slowly lower your leg to the starting position. Repeat with your opposite leg.
- You will feel this stretch in your thighs (quadriceps).
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat this stretch 10-15 times.
- If you are more advanced, speed up the process by jogging in place while trying to touch your heels to your rear end. **(Intermediate)**



- Keeping your hands up, start with your feet together.
- Lift your knee straight up in front of you.
- As you raise your knee as high as it can comfortably go, swing your knee out to the side.
- Slowly lower your leg back down to the starting position and repeat on the other side.
- This is a great one to develop better hip movement
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat this stretch 10-15 times. **(Intermediate)**



- Start with your feet approximately twice your shoulder width
- Squat down and place your hands on the inside of your knees.
- Keeping your back straight and head up, lunge down toward the left side. Keep your knee over your heel and point the toes of your straightened leg up.
- Return back to the starting position and repeat on the other side.
- This stretch should be felt in the muscles on the inside of your straight leg.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times on each side. **(Intermediate)**



- Starting on your hands and knees, place one hand behind your head.
- Slowly turn your body so that your elbow moves in toward your other arm.
- Rotate in toward your other arm as far as you can comfortably go, feeling the stretch behind your shoulder blade down to your lower back.
- Rotate out, trying to point your elbow up at the ceiling, working on getting that full range of motion in your back.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 15-20 times on each side. **(Intermediate)**



- Lie on your back with your knees and feet together. Keep your arms to your side.
- Raise your knees all the way to your chest.
- Slowly return back to the starting position.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 15-20 times.
- This move can put a tremendous amount of pressure on your lower back. Use caution if you have back problems. **(Intermediate)**



- Keeping your arms out in front of you, stand with your feet approximately twice your shoulder width.
- Keeping your posture nice and tall, look straight ahead. Squat down toward your right leg, thinking about keeping your posterior back. Keep your knee above your heel; don't let it get past your toes.
- Stand back up to the full starting position and repeat on the left side.
- This should be felt on the inside of the straight leg and can also be felt in the hamstring and glutes of the bent leg.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times on each side.
- If your knees move past your toes, you can put tremendous pressure on the knees.

(Intermediate)



- Begin with your feet a little wider than shoulder-width apart.
- Squat down until you feel the stretch.
- Return to your standing position and bring your knee up. Work on bringing it up higher and higher as you do more reps.
- Lower your leg and repeat the process, this time picking up your other leg.

- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times on each side. **(Intermediate)**



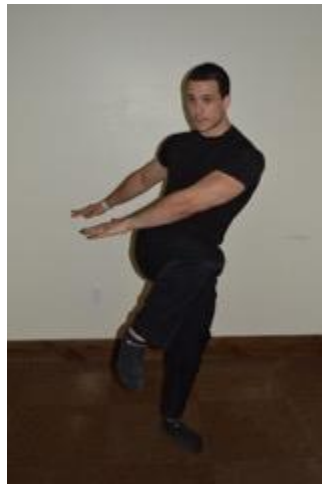
- Keeping your arms straight above you, stand with your feet together.
- Keeping your posture tall with your head up, take a large step forward and squat straight down. Keeping your back leg straight, ensure your front knee doesn't pass your toes.
- Lowering your arms in front of you, rotate your upper body toward the side of your forward foot.
- Keeping your balance, slowly return to the starting position and repeat with the other leg.
- You should feel this stretch in the thigh and hip flexors of the back leg and into the lower back.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times on each side. **(Intermediate)**



- Begin in a push-up position.
- Slowly rotate your hips to the side until you feel a stretch in your torso.
- Return back to the starting position and repeat in the other direction.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times on each side. **(Intermediate)**



- Begin in a push-up position.
- Rotate your left hip to the side, bringing your right hand off the floor. Slowly work your way to raising your right hand straight up toward the ceiling.
- Return to the starting position and repeat on the other side.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times. **(Intermediate)**



- Begin with your left leg forward and your right leg back with your arms reaching out toward your left side.
- Bring your right knee forward as you rotate your upper body toward the right side.
- With your right knee now approximately waist height, rotate your upper body all the way to the right side with your hands even with your hips.
- Return to the starting position and repeat 10-15 times. Switch to the other side.

- Ensure proper breathing. **(Intermediate)**



- Stand with your back approximately one foot away from a wall.
- With your feet shoulder-width apart and your palms up, slowly turn your body and try to place your hands on the wall. **DON'T FORCE IT!**
- Repeat the stretch to the other side.
- With this stretch, you can hold the position, or you can slowly turn from side to side and just touch the wall performing 10-15 repetitions. **(Advanced)**

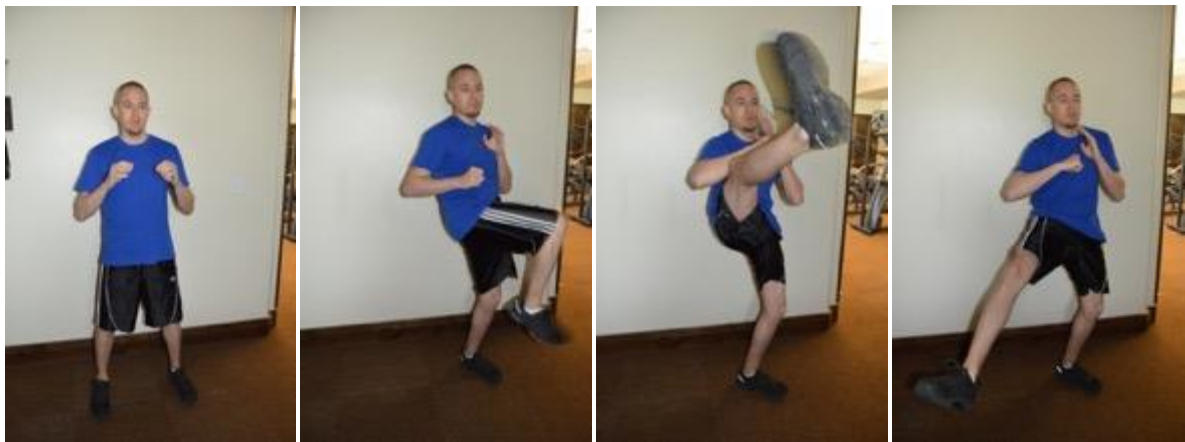


- Begin in a push-up position.
- Slowly raise your leg and place your foot up by your hand.
- Keep your hips raised, don't let them sink toward the ground.
- Slowly return to the starting position and repeat with the other side.
- You should feel this in the hip flexor of the straight leg and in the glutes and hamstrings of the bent leg.

- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times on each side.
- If you feel a pinching sensation in the hip flexors of the bent knee, this can be a great indicator that those muscles are tight. **(Advanced)**



- Lie on your stomach on the floor with your legs and arms spread apart.
- Bend a knee and slowly try to touch your feet to the ground on the opposite side of your body.
- Slowly return to the starting position and repeat on the other side.
- This stretch is a favorite of mine because you may feel a stretch in many different areas. You can feel this in the lower back, in your hip flexors, as well as in your latissimus dorsi.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat 10-15 times on each side.
- This one is not always recommended for people with lower back issues. Take care and move slowly on this stretch. **(Advanced)**



- Begin by standing with your feet shoulder-width apart with your hands up.
- Shifting your weight to your left foot, lift your right leg, bending your knee, and bring it across your body to the left side.

- Straighten your leg, kicking your right foot out and up and then back across to the right side of your body. This movement should be in the shape of a rainbow, starting low, reaching your highest point straight in front of you, and returning low at your starting point. **(Advanced)**



- Keeping your hands up, start with your feet approximately 6 inches apart.
 - Begin this movement by lifting your knee up. As you lift your knee, begin to bring your foot in toward your other leg and think of pushing your foot up toward your belt line.
 - This movement can be done slowly; however, to be more effective, you can do this like you are running in place.
 - This movement is great for the muscles in the hip.
- Ensure proper breathing and repeat this stretch 10-15 times. **(Advanced)**

Stretching Programs

I am asked all the time what my favorite stretches are, what I would recommend for certain ailments, and what someone should do for a specific sport or activity. The following pages contain specific stretches that I believe can help you in these situations. Please remember that these are just suggestions and are based on my experiences with people in these areas. They obviously don't take into account your self-evaluation; however, they are well-rounded programs that can benefit most people.

I would urge you to try new programs, but make sure you consider your evaluation and stretching level. If you are a beginner, don't do an advanced stretch, much less an advanced routine! Stretching can cause a level of discomfort, but don't continue a stretch that is actually causing you pain. I have said it before, but make sure that you have correct posture and that you are breathing correctly during each stretch. Occasionally you will notice yourself tensing up, which is usually caused by holding your breath or even doing a stretch you are not entirely comfortable doing. Try to focus on totally letting your body go during each stretch. As you are breathing in, focus on that air you are breathing rushing to the muscle you are stretching.

Each program has a series of pictures of stretches that I would recommend with the page number of that stretch under the photo. I challenge you to stretch every day in the morning, after your workout, or before you go to bed. I assure you that if you make this a part of your daily routine so that it becomes a habit, your body will thank you for it!