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Simple Neck & Shoulder Stretches

How to stretch.

Stretching should be done slowly without bouncing. Stretch to where you feel a slight, easy stretch. Hold this feeling for 5-30 seconds. As you hold this stretch, the feeling of tension should diminish. If it doesn't, just ease off slightly to a more comfortable stretch. The easy stretch reduces tension and readies the tissues for the developmental stretch.

After holding the easy stretch move a fraction of an inch further into the stretch until you feel mild tension again. This is the developmental stretch which should be held for 5-30 seconds. This feeling of stretch tension should also slightly diminish or stay the same. If the tension increases or becomes painful, you are over stretching. Ease off a bit to a comfortable stretch. The developmental stretch reduces tension and will safely increase flexibility.

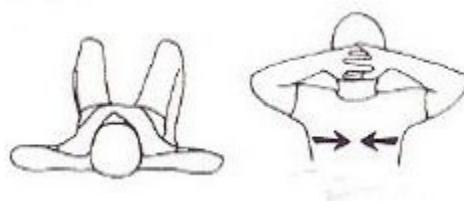
Hold stretch tensions that feel good to you. The key to stretching is to be relaxed while you concentrate on the area being stretched. Your breathing should be slow, deep and rhythmical. Don't worry about how far you can stretch. Stretch relaxed, and limberness will become just one of the many by-products of regular stretching.

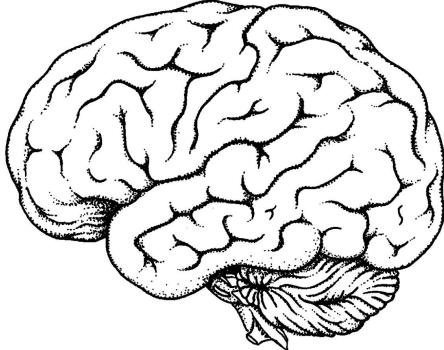
Note: If you have had any recent surgery, muscle or joint problem, please consult your chiropractor before starting a stretch or exercise program.

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

Shoulder blade stretch

From the bent-knee position, pull your shoulder blades together to create tension in the upper back area. As you do this your chest should move upward. Hold this controlled tension for 5 seconds, then relax and gently pull your head forward. This will allow the neck to be stretched effectively. Repeat 3 times.

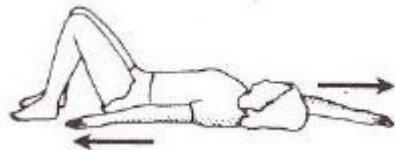




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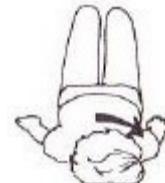
Rotator cuff stretch.

With your head resting on the floor, put one arm above your head (palm up) and the other arm down along your side (palm down). Reach in opposite directions at the same time to create a controlled stretch in your shoulders and back. Hold stretch for 10 seconds. Do both sides at least twice.



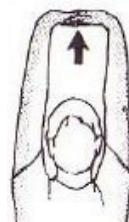
Neck stretch.

With arms alongside you, turn your chin toward your shoulder as you keep your head resting on the floor. Turn chin only as far as needed to get an easy stretch in the side of your neck. Hold for 10 seconds, then turn your head to stretch the other side. Repeat 3 times.



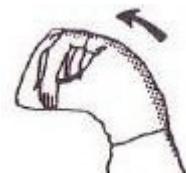
Shoulder stretch.

Interlace your fingers above your head. With your palms facing upward, push your arms slightly back and up. Feel the stretch in arms, shoulders and upper back. Hold stretch for 15 seconds. Do not hold your breath. This stretch is good to do anywhere, anytime. Excellent for slumping shoulders.



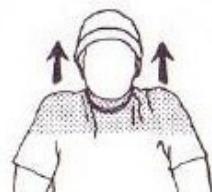
Side stretch.

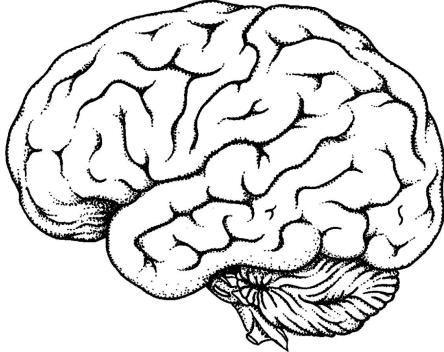
With arms overhead, hold the elbow of one arm. Standing upright, gently pull your elbow behind your head as you bend from your hips to your side. Hold an easy stretch for 10 seconds. Do both sides. Keeping your knees slightly bent will give you better balance.



Shrug stretch.

Raise the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold this tension for 5 seconds then relax your shoulders downward into their normal position. Do this 3 times. Good to use at the first signs of tightness or tension in the shoulder and neck area.

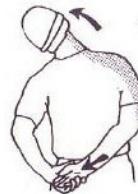




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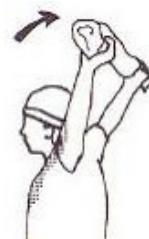
Trap stretch.

To stretch the side of your neck and top of shoulder, lean your head sideways toward your left shoulder as your left arm pulls your right arm down and across. Do both sides. This stretch can be done sitting on the floor, in a chair or while standing.



Pec stretch.

Hold a towel near both ends so that you can move it with straight arms up, over your head and down behind your back. Do not force this. Your hands should be far enough apart to allow for relatively free movement up, over and down. To isolate and add further stretch to the muscles of a particular area, hold the stretch at any place during this movement for 10-20 seconds.



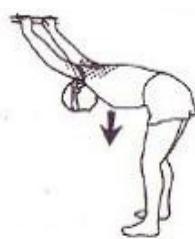
Upper back stretch.

This stretch is done with your fingers interlaced behind your back. Slowly turn your elbows inward while straightening your arms. It's good to do when you find yourself slumping forward from your shoulders. This stretch can be done at any time. Hold for 5-15 seconds. Perform twice.



Long stretch.

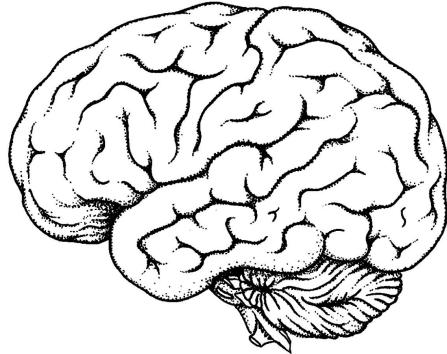
Place both hands shoulder width apart on a beam or countertop and let your upper body drop down as you keep your knees slightly bent; hips directly above feet. To change the area of stretch, bend your knees more and/or place your hands at different heights. Find a stretch that you can hold for 30 seconds. The top of a refrigerator or a file cabinet is good for this stretch.



Chest stretch.

Stand in a doorway and place your hands about shoulder height on either side of it. Move your upper body forward until you feel a comfortable stretch in your arms and chest. Keep your chest and head up, with knees slightly bent while doing this stretch. Hold stretch 15 seconds. Perform twice.





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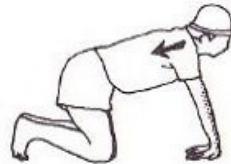
Delt stretch.

Hold your left arm just above the elbow with your right hand. Gently pull your left elbow toward your opposite shoulder as you look over your left shoulder. Hold the stretch for 15-20 seconds. Stretch both sides evenly.



Forearm stretch.

From the position illustrated, hold your palms flat and fingers pointed toward you. Slowly lean backwards to stretch the forearms and wrists. Be sure to keep your palms flat. Hold a comfortable stretch for 20-25 seconds. Do not over stretch! Stretch for a good feeling.



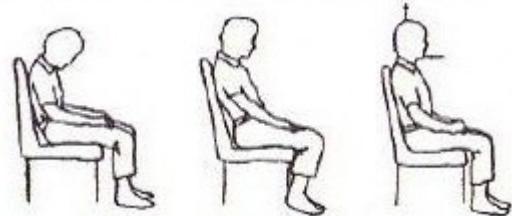
Lat stretch.

With legs bent under you, reach forward with one arm at the end of a mat, carpet or anything you can hold onto. If you can't grab something, just pull back with your arm straight while pressing down slightly with your hand. Hold stretch for 20 seconds each side. You should feel the stretch in your shoulder, arms, sides, and upper back, or even in your lower back.



Posture stretch.

If you have a tendency for forward head posture and rounded shoulders, then bring yourself into new alignment. Upright posture, when practiced regularly, will help keep the body fresh with more energy and less tension. Retract your chin slightly (not down; not up) with the crown of your head being pulled straight up. Pull shoulders back and down. Breathe with the idea that you want the middle of your back to expand outward, and your belly to fill with air. Practice this position as often as possible – whilst driving or sitting at work. Better posture means better health!



Remember to stretch before exercise and never force anything!