

Stretching for Posture

Hand Behind Back Towel Stretch

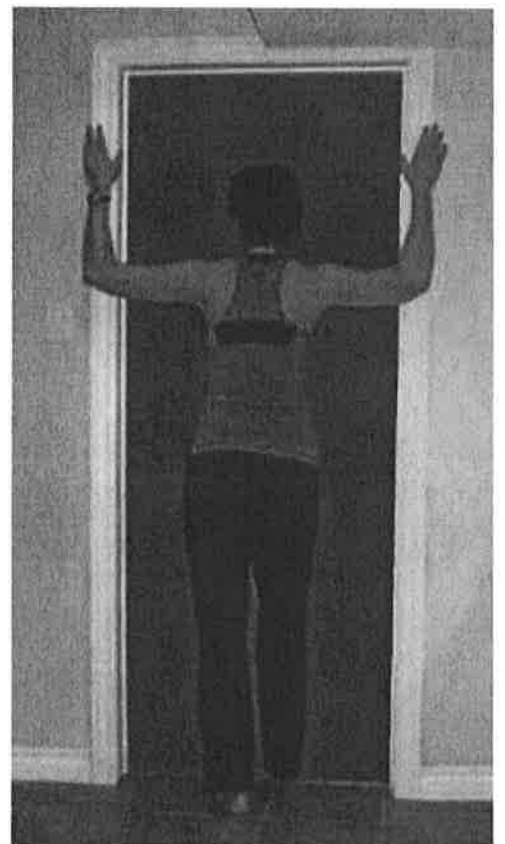
1. Throw a towel over your left shoulder and grab a hold of the end of it with your right hand.
2. Use your left hand to pull your right hand up your spine.
3. Keep your right arm relaxed as you pull with your left.
4. Pull only to the point of resistance and hold this position for 30 to 60 seconds.
5. Repeat this on the other side.



Doorway Stretch

This stretch stretches the muscles on the front of your chest and shoulders.

1. Only lift your arms into the doorway as far as you comfortably can. If you have shoulder pain, consult your physical therapist prior to performing this stretch.
2. Keep your chest up and take a small step into the doorway. Only move into the point of resistance.
3. Hold this position for 30 to 60 seconds.



Stretching for Posture

Neck Flexion

With prolonged sitting at computers we become accustomed to the forward head posture. This posture leads to tightness in the short neck extensors and can further narrow disc spaces in the neck leading to aggravation of arthritis and pinched nerves. This stretch works to stretch these tight extensors and open up the spaces where the nerves come out of your neck.

You must be sure to keep your chin tucked in prior to pulling your head forward to minimized shearing forces on the vertebrae in your neck. Shearing forces can further aggravate arthritis and pinch nerves. If you have a neck condition, definitely consult your physical therapist prior to doing this exercise.

1. Stand or sit tall with your chest up.
2. Put one hand on your chin and translate your head back over your shoulders (do not look down or up, you should be looking straight ahead) so you have a double chin.
3. Hold your chin back as you reach over your head and gently pull the top of your head forward. This is not a large movement, but is very effective. Remember to be gentle as there are a lot of little joints in your neck and muscles at the base of your skull that may be sensitive.
4. Hold this for 30 to 60 seconds.



Hip Flexor Stretch

The hip flexors will quickly become tight if you spend a lot of time sitting. Tight hip flexors can often be an indirect cause of back pain when walking. In order to perform this stretch you may need to put a cushion or two on the floor for your knee if you have knee stiffness.

1. Get down onto the right knee and put your left foot in front of you flat on the floor. It may help to do this next to a chair or bed to hold onto.
2. Put your right hand on your right hip, keep your chest up and push your right hip forward. Do not lean forward - keep your chest up.
3. At the fully stretched position your right knee should be behind you. Hold this position for 30 to 60 seconds.
4. Do not bounce. More benefit is achieved if you do not bounce.
5. Repeat this on the left side.



Stretching for Posture

If you have arthritic knees, a knee replacement or a hip replacement, definitely consult your physical therapist prior to attempting this maneuver.

Hamstring Stretch

The easiest way of stretching the hamstrings without straining your back is to perform the standing hamstring stretch.

1. Find a stool or chair and put your right foot up on the chair.
2. Straighten your right knee, keep your chest up and your back straight as you slowly lean forward toward your right foot.
3. You can gently hold your right knee straight as you do so to prevent it from bending up.
4. Hold this position for 30 to 60 seconds.

DO NOT bounce into this as bouncing can cause muscle or back injury. You gain more by holding a sustained stretch. Repeat this with the left leg.



Calf Stretch

1. Stand back from a wall and place both hands on the wall so that your arms are straight.
2. Place your right foot behind you while keeping your toes pointing forward.
3. Keep your right heel on the ground and your right knee straight.
4. Slowly lean forward until you feel a stretch in the back of your leg.
5. Hold this for 30 to 60 seconds. Do not bounce, as a sustained stretch is more effective and bouncing can lead to injury.
6. From this position bend the right knee, and while keeping your heel on the ground, hold this position for an additional 30 to 60 seconds to stretch both parts of the calf musculature.
7. Repeat on the left side.



