

Stretches and back care exercises

Before you begin any stretching, it's important to first warm up the muscles. Five to ten minutes of moderate physical activity will prepare your body for work and help reduce the likelihood of muscle strain. Ideally, all exercise sessions should be followed by a few minutes of stretching.



Chest and shoulder stretch

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Clasp hands behind your back. Straighten and raise your arms, making sure your chest doesn't collapse. Lift your chest to your chin. Hold for 15 seconds, then relax. Repeat three times. You should feel a stretch in the chest and front shoulders.

Tall stretch

While standing or sitting, grasp your hands together above your head, with your palms up and shoulders relaxed. Stretch arms up. Don't hold your breath or arch your back. Hold for 15 seconds. This is a good stretch to do anytime, anywhere.



Calf stretch

Stand with one foot in front of the other. Bend the front leg while keeping the back leg straight – push your back heel to the floor. Bend your forward knee until a comfortable stretch is felt in your back calf. You can hold on to a wall or chair for balance. Hold for 15 seconds. Repeat three times on each leg.



Upper back stretch

Sit with one leg straight out in front, and the other leg bent with the foot against the inner thigh. Leaning forward from the hips, reach hands down the leg as far as comfortable, keeping the back as straight as possible. Do not round the back while leaning forward. Reach toward the toes. Hold the stretch for 15 seconds. Repeat two to three times.



Standing lower back stretch

Stand with your feet hip-width apart, feet firmly planted on the ground, with your hands supporting your lower back and keeping your chin to your chest. Gently arch your back. Hold for 15 seconds. You should feel a stretch in your lower back and possibly front hips.



Quadriceps stretch

Balance or use a stable object for support. Stand straight and grasp your right foot with your left hand behind you. Gently pull your foot towards your buttocks until you feel a gentle stretch down the front of your leg. Hold for 15 seconds, then relax. Repeat three times on each leg. If you can't reach your foot, you can hold on to your pants or socks.



Tuck stretch

Lie on the floor or bed. Pull your knees to your chest. Push lower back towards the ground and hold for 15 seconds. Relax and repeat three times.

Lower back rotation stretch

Sit as shown in diagram – left leg straight, right leg crossing over left leg with right foot on the floor. Place your left elbow on the outside of bent right leg and right hand behind you. Turn your head to look over right shoulder. Hold for 15 seconds. Reverse position and look the other way. Repeat twice on each side.



Back and shoulder stretch

Hold your right wrist with your left hand behind your back. Lean your left ear to your left shoulder. Left hand pulls right arm down and across behind your back. You should feel a stretch in your right-side neck and shoulder. Hold stretch for 15 seconds, then relax. Repeat three times on each side.

Quadricep and groin stretch

Kneel on the floor, step forward until the front knee is over your ankle and the other knee is resting on the floor. Lower front hip downwards without moving knee position. You should feel an easy stretch in the front hip and thigh of the back leg. Hold for 15 seconds. Repeat three times for each leg. Hold on to a chair for balance.



Caution

If you have had a previous injury, are currently injured or are unsure of how to undertake these stretches safely, please check these stretches with your doctor, other qualified health professional or specialist. Do not stretch to the point of pain. Stretches should be gentle and slow, never bouncy.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

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