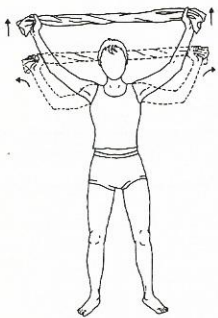


EXERCISES for FLEXIBILITY

Stretching regularly can help keep you mobile and flexible and may help avoid neck or back aches and pains. Try the following stretches.

Do them gently. You should not feel any pain. Stretch slowly and hold each stretch for 10-15 seconds. For the best results do these exercises after daily aerobic exercise when warmed up.

1. Standing neck and shoulder stretch

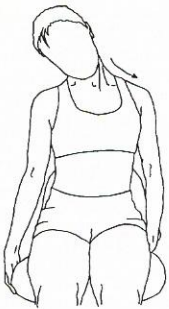


Hold the ends of a rolled-up towel with each hand. Take a breath in and, while breathing out, raise the towel above your head. With arms raised, keep a gentle outward pull on the towel to work the shoulder muscles.

Advanced exercise

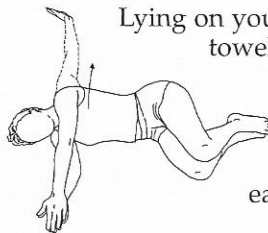
Pull the towel behind the shoulders. Repeat 2-3 times.

2. Sitting neck stretch



While sitting in a chair, place your left hand under your buttocks, palm facing upwards. Tuck your chin in to your chest (to create a 'double chin') and gently bend your head away from the hand you are sitting on. Hold for 6-10 seconds. Repeat each side.

3. Mid back stretch

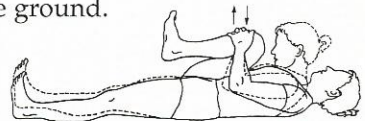


Lying on your right side, rest a towel under your head.

Now stretch your left arm upwards and behind you. Repeat 2-3 times each side.

4. Gentle hip stretch

Lying on your back, hug one knee to your chest. Keep your head resting on the ground. Repeat 2-3 times for each leg.

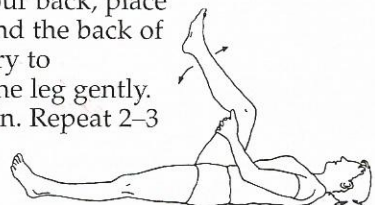


Advanced exercise

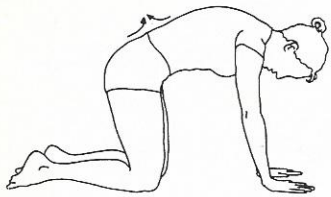
Progress to raising your head and bringing your forehead to your knee.

5. Hamstring stretch

Lying on your back, place hands around the back of the thigh. Try to straighten the leg gently. Do not strain. Repeat 2-3 times for each leg.



6. Back stretch flexing ('cat stretch')



On hands and knees, gently curve your back upwards. Do not hold the position but go on to exercise seven.

7. Lower back release

Now gently stretch your arms out in front of your body and place the buttocks between the heels.



Helpful daily back stretches:

If your work involves bending forward for extended periods of time, take regular breaks and try the following stretch.



8. Standing back stretch

Place hands on the lower back and support your spine while gently leaning backwards. Do not repeat this exercise if it causes pain.

Points to remember when exercising:

- Always check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.
- A physiotherapist can test your flexibility and provide an exercise program to improve flexibility and to suit specific needs.
- Warm up muscles before stretching. e.g. five minutes of walking.
- Always combine stretching with regular aerobic exercise such as swimming, walking or cycling to maintain a healthy heart and lungs (called cardiovascular fitness).
- Do all neck and back stretches slowly and gently.
- Take regular breaks every 30 minutes if you have a desk job – do some of the recommended neck and shoulder stretches.
- Stretch your back if work involves leaning forward for extended periods
- Strong abdominal muscles can help posture and help support your back. A physiotherapist can show specific stomach exercises that are most suitable to your flexibility and fitness level.

Further Reading

All exercises shown are from physiotherapist Francine St George's book, *Bodyworks* (ABC Publishers 1999).

Other relevant fact cards

- *Sprains and Strains*
- *Back Pain*

Contact:

A doctor – listed under medical practitioners in the yellow pages of the phone book

A physiotherapist – at the nearest public hospital, local community health centre or look in the yellow pages of the phone book

A Self Care pharmacist. To find: (02) 6283 4777

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

Your Self Care Pharmacist

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Pharmacy Self Care has a strong commitment to providing current and reliable health information. The information on this card was current at the time of printing.

