

Patty's PT Tips

Stretching

February 9, 2022

Creating a Program that Works for You

Pre-Stretching self-massage with hands or tools-focus of the muscle groups you plan to stretch. You may want to pick different body parts for different times of day and in different positions.

How to Stretch

- Relaxed, sustained stretch with your attention focused on the muscles to be stretched
- No Bouncing, no pain
- Easy Stretch-10 to 30 seconds Mild tension, **Relax** as you hold the stretch. The feeling of tension should ease as you hold the stretch. You can also alternate with 3 second stretch/ 2 second rest if the more prolonged holding is difficult.
- Breathing-should be slow and rhythmical. DO NOT hold breath
- Counting- when initiating a stretching program silently count slowly to learn timing and rhythm. Over time your body will develop a sense of appropriate time and feel

The Stretch Reflex

This is a protective mechanism. Any time you stretch the muscle fibers too far a nerve reflex responds by sending a signal to the muscles to contract, this keeps the muscle from being injured. Therefore, when you stretch too far, you tighten the very muscles you are trying to stretch. This can cause microscopic tearing of the muscle fibers and formation of scar tissue. The result is decrease elasticity of the muscle.

Sequencing of a Stretching Program

Position yourself comfortably to allow the spine to relax and decompress when lying on back. This may require towel rolls under the neck, upper arms, knees or even a folded towel in the hollow of your low back. If stretching in sitting, use pillow props where needed so body can relax and you can breathe into the stretch.

Breathing-start with 5 diaphragmatic breaths. Let ribs, neck and pelvic floor relax with the inhale. Draw the pelvic floor up and pull the belly button in with the exhale. Breathe in 5 counts, breathe out for 5.

Start from the top and work your way down

- a. Chin tuck (head press)-lengthen back of neck, press the back of head into the bed or pillow if lying down or pull back of head backwards in sitting. Hold 5 counts/ relax 5/repeat 5 times
- b. Arm lengthener-maintain chin tuck, arms at sides. Lengthen arms and pull shoulder blades together and down. Open the chest. 5/5/5
- c. Single Knee to chest-you may need a strap under the thigh to assist. 3 repetitions on each leg. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds. Draw pelvic floor up and pull belly button in when raising and lowering the leg. Breathe normally during the stretch. May be done sitting.
- d. Double Knee to chest-same technique as the single but bring knees up and lower one leg at a time to reduce mechanical stress on low back and pelvic girdle. Leaning chest over thighs in sitting is also a double knee to chest. Pay attention to how your back is feeling.
- e. “Morning stretches”-see additional handout. This can help you find your tight spots.
- f. Pelvic Clock- with both knees bent-slowly rock pelvis around the numbers of a clock face if the clock was laying on your lower belly. Move slowly, smoothly, clockwise and counter clockwise 5 times in each direction. Pay attention to breathing rhythmically. May also be done in sitting. Feel where your “sit bones”, pubic bone and tail bone make contact with the chair as you “rock around the clock”.
- g. Lower Back and side stretch-see additional handout
- h. “The Sphinx” -On belly when propped up on elbows or in sitting by leaning forward at hips and propping forearms on thighs or table top. Draw shoulder blades down and back with a chin tuck. Pay attention to pain signals
- i. “Cobra” position if tolerable. On belly with pressing upper body up on extended arms. Can be done with palms on seat of chair and leaning forward. No low back pain or radiating pain into buttocks or legs!!
- j. Hamstring/calf stretches (see handout). You may need help with this one. I prefer to do hamstrings and calf muscles sitting or standing. It’s easier to get into position.

Illustrations:

11. MORNING STRETCHES

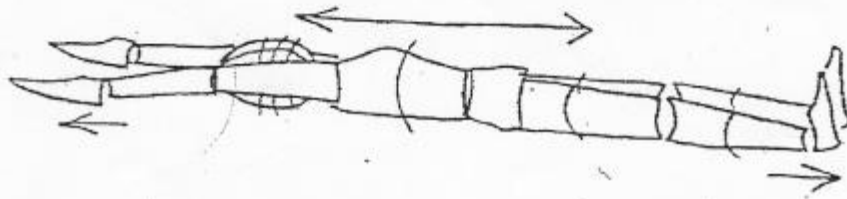
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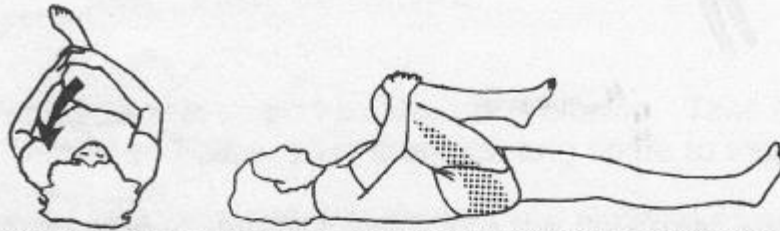
Combination of Leg Lengtheners and Arm Lengtheners. Start on back, knees straight, arms at sides, palms down. Keeping elbows straight, bring arms up and back overhead as far as you can. Keep arms back as you:

- a. Stretch and lengthen right arm/right leg.
- b. Stretch and lengthen left arm/left leg.
- c. Stretch and lengthen right arm/left leg.
- d. Stretch and lengthen left arm/right leg.
- e. Stretch and lengthen both arms/both legs.

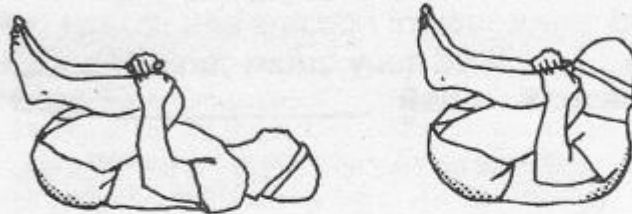
Repetitions: _____

NOTE: **DO NOT HOLD YOUR BREATH.** Breathe **OUT** as you stretch and lengthen.

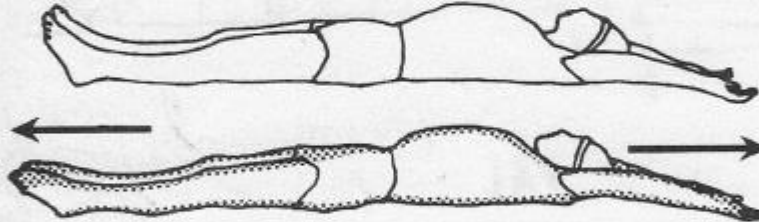




Variation: Pull your knee to your chest, then think of pulling the knee across your body toward your opposite shoulder to create a stretch on the outside of your right hip. Hold an easy stretch for 20 seconds. Do both sides.



After pulling one leg at a time to your chest, pull both legs to your chest. This time concentrate on keeping the back of your head down and then curling your head up toward your knees.

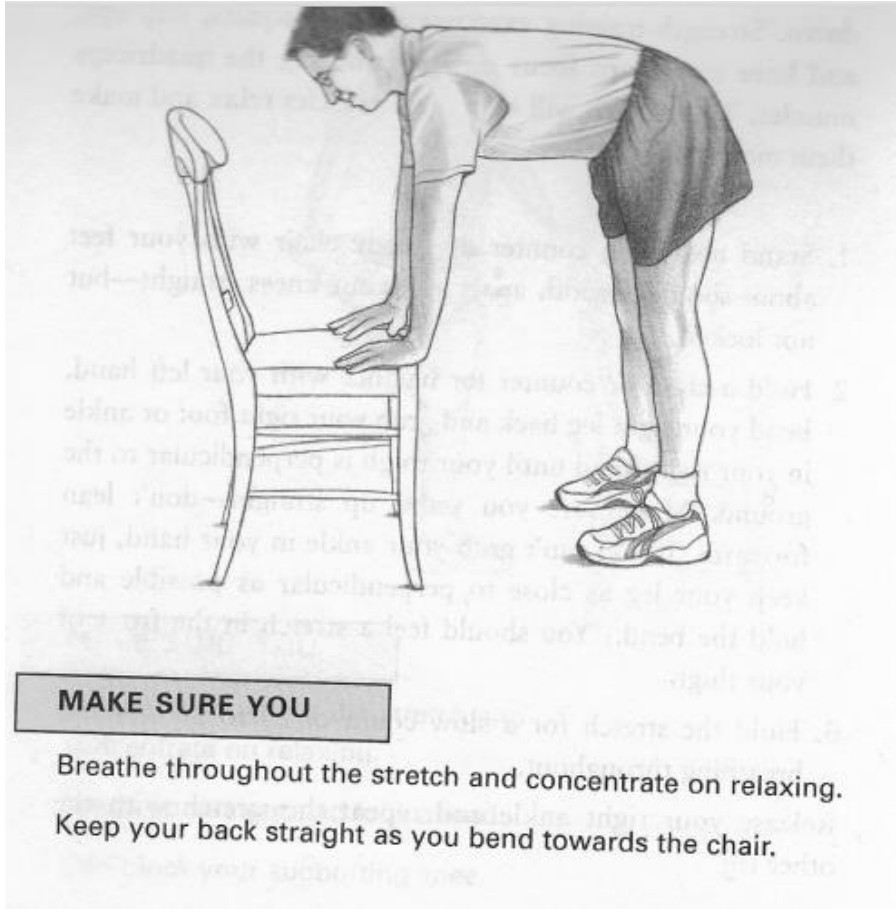


Again, straighten out both legs. Stretch and then relax.

A Stretch for the Lower Back and Side of Hip



Bend one knee at 90° and, with your opposite hand, pull that bent leg up and over your other leg as shown above. Turn your head to look toward the hand of the arm that is straight (head should be resting on floor, not held up). Now, using the hand on your thigh (resting just above knee) pull your bent leg down toward the floor until you get the right stretch feeling in your lower back and side of hip. Keep feet and ankles relaxed. Make sure the back of your shoulders are flat on the floor. If not, the angle changes between the shoulders and the hips and it is more difficult to create a proper stretch. Hold an easy stretch for 30 seconds, each side.



STRETCH

Ankles: Gastrocnemius, Peroneous longus, Soleus

REMEMBER: Stretch before and after each Iso-Band exercise.

Stretch P
15-30 seconds
Do twice

Stretch Q
60 seconds

Caution: If you have had or do have any problems with your leg or ankle consult your physician prior to doing these stretches or strengthening exercises. When placing the Iso-Band under the foot make sure it is secure and

Note: When first attempting the exercise, keep resistance of the band and number of repetitions at a minimum to avoid muscle soreness or undue strain. Remember to stretch before and after the exercise.