

Neck, Shoulder & Arm Stretches

Note: If you have had any recent surgery, muscle or joint problem, please consult your personal health care professional before starting a stretching or exercise program.

How to Stretch:

Stretching should be done slowly without bouncing. Stretch to where you feel a slight, easy stretch. Hold this feeling for 5-15 seconds. As you hold this stretch, the feeling of tension should diminish. If it doesn't, just ease off slightly into a more comfortable stretch. The easy stretch reduces tension and readies the tissues for the developmental stretch.

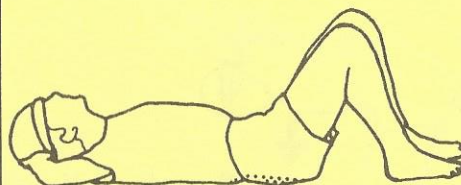
After holding the easy stretch move a fraction of an inch farther into the stretch until you feel mild tension again. This is the developmental stretch which should be held for 5-10 seconds. This feeling of stretch tension should also slightly diminish or stay the same.

If the tension increases or becomes painful, you are overstretching. Ease off a bit to a comfortable stretch. The developmental stretch reduces tension and will safely increase flexibility.

Hold only 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.

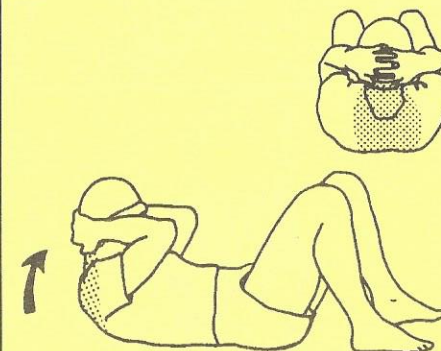
The dotted areas are those areas of the body where you will most likely feel the stretch.

1



Before you do any of the following stretches, rest on your back with knees bent and fingers interlaced behind your head for 30 seconds. Concentrate on being relaxed.

2



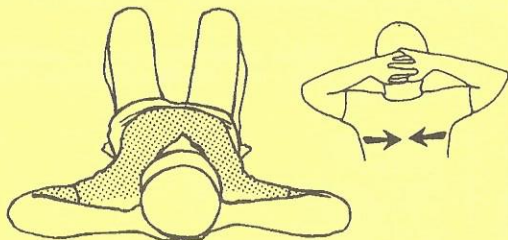
Interlace your fingers behind your head and rest your arms on the mat. Using the power of your arms, slowly bring your head, neck and shoulders forward until you feel a slight stretch. Hold an easy stretch for 5 seconds. Repeat three times. Do not overstretch.

3

Repeat stretch 2

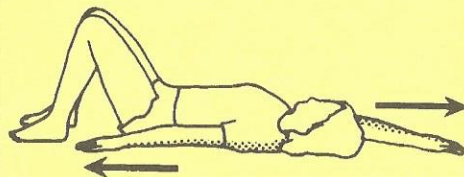
4

5



Shoulder Blade Pinch: 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 4-5 seconds, then relax and gently pull your head forward as shown in stretch #2. This will help release tension and allow the neck to be stretched effectively.

Think of creating tension, relaxing the same area, then stretching the back of the neck to help keep the muscles of the neck free to move without tightness. Repeat 3-4 times.



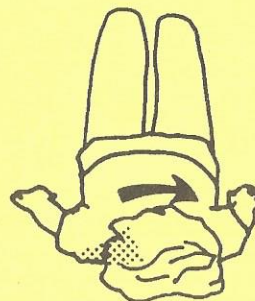
With your head resting on the floor or mat, put one arm above your head (palm up) and the other arm down along your side (palm down). Reach in opposite directions at the same time to create a controlled stretch in your shoulders and back. Hold stretch for 8-10 seconds. Do both sides at least twice. Keep your lower back relaxed and flat.

6

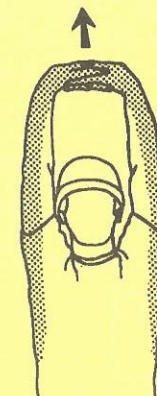
Repeat stretch 2

7

8

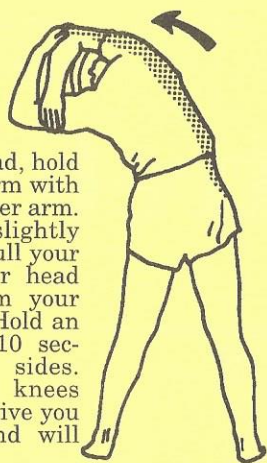


With your arms along your sides, turn your chin toward your shoulder (as you keep your head resting on the floor). Turn chin only as far as needed to get an easy stretch in the side of your neck. Hold 8 seconds, then turn your head to stretch the other side. Repeat 2-3 times.



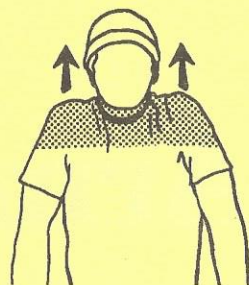
Interlace your fingers above your head. With your palms facing upward, push your arms slightly back and up. Feel the stretch in arms, shoulders and upper back. Hold stretch for 15 seconds. Do not hold your breath. This stretch is good to do anywhere, anytime.

9



With arms overhead, hold the elbow of one arm with the hand of the other arm. Keeping knees slightly bent (1"), gently pull your elbow behind your head as you bend from your hips to the side. Hold an easy stretch for 10 seconds. Do both sides. Keeping your knees slightly bent will give you better balance and will protect your back.

10



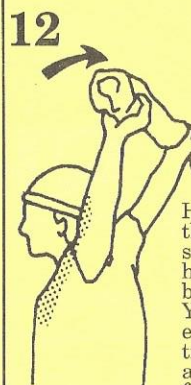
Shoulder Shrug: Raise the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel slight tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold this feeling of tension for 3-5 seconds, then relax your shoulders downward into their normal position. Do this 2-3 times. Good to use at the first signs of tightness or tension in the shoulder and neck area.

11



To stretch the side of your neck and top of shoulder, lean your head sideways toward your left shoulder as your left hand pulls your right arm down and across. Hold for 8-10 seconds. Stretch both sides. This stretch can be done while sitting or standing.

12



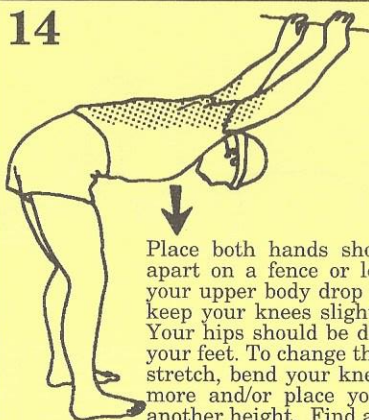
Hold a towel near both ends so that you can move it with straight arms up, over your head and down behind your back. Do not strain or force it. Your hands should be far enough apart to allow for relatively free movement up, over and down. To isolate and add further stretch to the muscles of a particular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

13



Interlace your fingers behind your back and slowly turn your elbows inward while straightening your arms. This is good to do when you find yourself slumping forward from the shoulders. This stretch can be done at anytime. Hold for 5-15 seconds. Do twice.

14



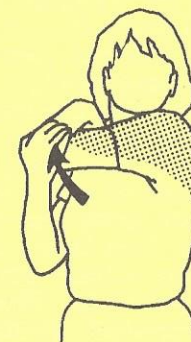
Place both hands shoulder width apart on a fence or ledge and let your upper body drop down as you keep your knees slightly bent (1"). Your hips should be directly above your feet. To change the area of the stretch, bend your knees just a bit more and/or place your hands at another height. Find a stretch that you can hold for at least 30 seconds. *(Remember to always bend your knees when coming out of this stretch.)*

15



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

16



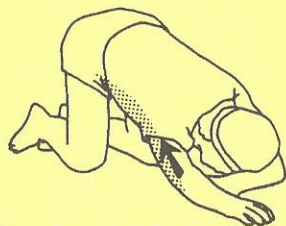
Hold your left arm just above the elbow with your right hand. Now gently pull your elbow toward opposite shoulder as you look over your left shoulder. Hold stretch for 15-20 seconds. Do both sides.

17



From the position illustrated above, with 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 15-20 seconds. Do not overstretch. Stretch for a good feeling. Enjoy stretching.

18



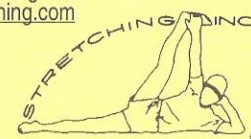
With legs bent under you, reach forward with one arm and grab the end of a mat, carpet or anything you can hold onto. If you can't grab onto something just pull back with your arms straight while pressing down slightly with your hand. (Do likewise pulling on end of mat.) Hold stretch for 20 seconds. Stretch each side. Don't strain. You should feel the stretch in your shoulders, arms, sides and upper back, or even in your lower back. Breathe easily.

If you have a tendency to have a forward head, rounded shoulders with lower back tension, then bring yourself into new alignment. This position, when practiced regularly, will help keep the body fresh with more energy and less tension. This aligned position is done by pulling your chin in slightly (not down, not up) with the top of the back of the head being pulled straight up. Think of shoulders back and down. Breathe with the idea that you want the middle of your back to expand outward. Tighten your abdominal muscles as you flatten your lower back into the chair. This is real good to do while driving or sitting to take pressure off of lower back. Practice this position often as you naturally train your muscles to hold this more alive alignment without conscious effort. Have patience with yourself.



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Bob and Jean Anderson, creators of this stretching chart are also the authors of the book, STRETCHING. Now a revised ©2000 edition.