

A simple static stretching routine

- Stretch only after warming up, or after exercise, when muscles are warm.
- Repeat each stretch 2 to 3 times, working both sides of the body equally.
- Hold each stretch for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Do not stretch to the point of pain.
- Breathe freely while stretching.
- Do not bounce.



Neck side flexion.

Lower your ear towards your shoulder while keeping your face looking forwards; feel the stretch along the opposite side of your neck; return to upright. Repeat on the other side. In addition, you can also stretch the opposite hand towards the floor as this increases the stretch on the neck muscles.



Triceps (back of upper arm) stretch.

Lift both arms above your head and bend your elbows so that your forearms are behind your head (but not resting on it); gently grasp your right elbow with your left hand; allow your right hand to drop towards the middle of your shoulder blades; feel the stretch on the outside of your upper right arm. Gently pull your right elbow towards your left shoulder to deepen the stretch. Repeat for your other arm.



Shoulder (internal rotator) stretch.

Hold a towel between both hands as shown; gently pull the towel upwards with your left hand; feel the stretch in the shoulder of your right arm as this arm is gently pulled further up your back. Repeat for the opposite shoulder.



Supraspinatus (top of shoulder blade) stretch.

Cross your right arm in front of your chest, placing your right hand over your left shoulder and keeping your right arm parallel to the ground; use your left hand to push your right elbow gently towards your left shoulder; feel the stretch in the muscle across the top of your right shoulder blade. Repeat for the opposite shoulder.



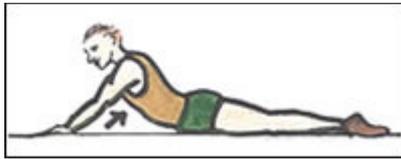
Pectoral (chest) stretch.

Place your right hand on a doorway at shoulder height with your elbow straight; move your feet so that you turn your chest and body gently away from your arm; feel the stretch on the right-hand side of your chest and along the inside of your right upper arm. Repeat for the opposite side. (You can also do the stretch with your arm slightly elevated, as shown.)



Biceps (front of upper arm) stretch.

Sit on a floor mat with your feet flat on the floor in front of you and knees bent; place your hands flat on the mat behind you, fairly close together, with your fingers pointing away from you. Walk your hands away from your bottom to feel the stretch in the muscles at the front of your upper arms.



Lower back extension and abdominal stretch.

(Note: if you have lower back problems this stretch may not be suitable for you.) Lie face down on a mat on the floor with your hands in front of you, elbows slightly bent to make a diamond shape; straighten your elbows so that your chest begins to lift off the floor; feel the stretch along the front of your abdomen. Be aware that having your hands close to your shoulders will produce a very strong abdominal stretch and a greater extension in your lower back, which may be uncomfortable for some people.



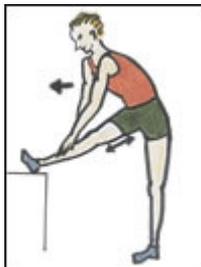
Upper back extension.

Kneel on a floor mat on all fours (i.e. on your hands and knees). Gently stretch your arms out in front of you along the floor while allowing your head to drop towards the floor and your bottom to move towards your heels; feel the stretch in your upper back between your shoulder blades. Gently walk your fingertips away from your body for a stronger stretch in the shoulders. Work on keeping your tail bone as close to your heels as possible.



Side stretch.

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend your upper body to the right while continuing to face the front and not allowing your hips to rotate; at the same time use your right hand to push your right hip gently in the opposite direction; feel the stretch along the left-hand side of your torso. Repeat for the opposite side.



Hamstring (back of thigh) stretch.

Place your right foot on a bench or chair with your leg extended at the knee (straight leg); slowly lean forwards while reaching your hands towards your right shin and keeping your torso straight; feel the stretch along the back of your right thigh. Keep your head up and looking forwards so that you bend from the waist and don't hunch. Repeat for the opposite leg.



Quadriceps (front of thigh) stretch.

Steady yourself by resting your left hand on a wall; keep an upright posture and lift your right foot off the ground. Bend the right knee and grasp your right ankle with your right hand; gently pull your ankle up and back until you feel a stretch in the front of your right thigh. Your left leg should be slightly bent at the knee. Repeat for the opposite leg.



Gluteal (bottom muscle) stretch.

Lie on your back on a floor mat with your knees bent, hip-width apart, and feet flat on the floor; lift your left leg and place your left ankle across your right knee; clasp your fingers around your right knee; now lift your right foot off the ground and pull your right knee towards you to feel a stretch in the gluteal muscles of your left buttock. Your head can be on the floor if this is more comfortable. Repeat for the opposite side.



Adductor (groin) stretch.

Standing upright, place your hands on your hips for balance, and your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart; keep your feet pointing to the front and lunge sideways taking your weight on your left foot and bending your left knee; feel the stretch in your right groin. Repeat for the opposite side.



Hip flexor (front of hip) stretch.

Kneel by placing your right knee on a padded mat and your left foot flat on the floor in front of you and forward of your left knee; steady yourself by keeping your posture upright and resting your hands on your left knee; don't let your left knee project forward of your foot; gently push your hips forwards to feel a stretch at the front of your right hip. Keep your gluteal muscles contracted to keep your bottom down. Repeat the stretch for the opposite side.



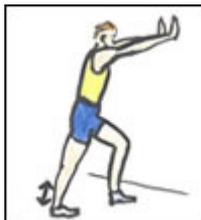
Tensor fascia (outer hip area) stretch.

Rest your hands on a table or wall in front of you for balance; cross your right leg behind your left, placing your feet about a foot-length apart; try to keep your posture fairly upright while pushing your right hip outwards; feel the stretch along the outer side of your right hip. Repeat for the opposite hip.



Iliotibial band (outer thigh area from hip to knee) stretch.

Stand with your left side at roughly arm's length from a wall and place your left hand on the wall for balance; cross your right leg in front of your left leg; now, with your weight mainly on your left leg, lean your left hip towards the wall; feel the stretch down the outside of your left leg from your hip to your knee, which is the area of the iliotibial band. Repeat for the opposite leg.



Gastrocnemius (calf) stretch.

Stand facing a wall and place your hands on the wall at eye level; step your right leg back; bend the front knee and gently lean into the wall while keeping your back leg straight and the heel of your back foot on the ground; feel the stretch in the back of your right calf. Repeat for the other side.



Soleus (deep calf) stretch.

Stand facing a wall and place your hands on the wall at chest height; step your right leg back; bend both knees slightly; your right knee should be over and in front of your right foot; feel the stretch in the lower one-third of your right calf. Make sure to keep your pelvis tucked under — if you arch your bottom out you won't feel a stretch in your calf. Repeat for the other side.