

# Lower Back 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.*

Stretching can be done before and after activity or whenever you feel like it.

## 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.

Do a light warm-up of walking for several minutes prior to stretching.

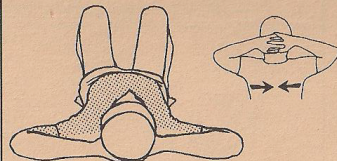
*The dotted areas are those areas of the body where you will most likely feel the stretch.*

3



Interlace your fingers behind your head and rest your arms on the floor. Using the power of your arms, slowly bring your head and shoulders forward until you feel a slight stretch in the neck and upper back area. Think of elbows going toward mid-thighs. Hold an easy stretch for 5 seconds. Repeat three times. Do not overstretch.

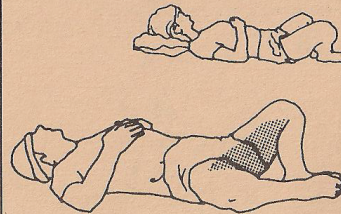
4



**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 #3. 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.

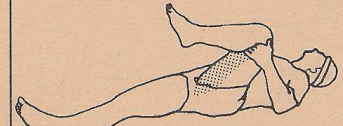
Repeat stretch 3 5

1



Relax with your knees bent and the soles of your feet together. (Lie with a pillow under your head if you'd like.) This comfortable position will stretch your groin. Hold this stretch for 50 seconds. Breathe deeply.

2



Next, straighten both legs and relax, then pull your left leg toward your chest. For this stretch keep the back of your head on the floor, if possible, but don't strain. Hold an easy stretch for 30 seconds. Repeat, pulling your right leg toward your chest. Do not hold your breath.

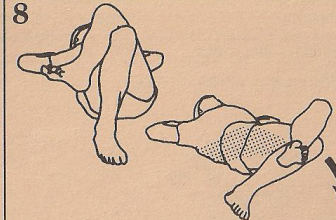
6



To relieve tension in lower back area, tighten your butt (gluteus) muscles and, at the same time, tighten your abdominal muscles to flatten your lower back. Hold this tension for 5-8 seconds, then relax. Repeat 2-3 times. Concentrate on maintaining constant muscle contraction. This pelvic tilting exercise will strengthen the gluteus and abdominal muscles so that you are able to sit and stand with good posture. Use these tension controls when sitting and standing.

Repeat stretch 4 7

8



Beginning in the same starting position as for the last stretch, lift the left leg over the right leg. From here, use your left leg to pull your right leg toward the floor until you feel a good stretch along the side of hip and/or lower back. Stretch and relax. Keep the upper back, shoulders and elbows flat on the floor. *The idea is not to touch the floor with your right knee, but to stretch within your limits.* Hold for 10-15 seconds. Repeat stretch for other side.