

Stretches

Regularly stretching your muscles improves flexibility; prevents muscle stiffness, strain and soreness; and leaves you feeling refreshed. Stretching can also increase your mental well-being by allowing you a break from your daily routine.

The Mayo Clinic suggests that regular stretching is a powerful part of any wellness program:

Stretching can relieve stress. Stretching relaxes the tense muscles that often accompany stress.

Stretching increases flexibility. Flexible muscles can improve your daily performance. Tasks such as lifting packages, bending to tie your shoes or hurrying to catch a bus become easier and less tiring.

Stretching improves circulation. Stretching increases blood flow to your muscles. Improved circulation can speed recovery after muscle injuries.

Stretching promotes better posture. Frequent stretching keeps your muscles from getting tight, allowing you to maintain proper posture and minimize aches and pains.

Stretching improves range of motion of your joints. Good range of motion keeps you in better balance, which will help keep you mobile and less prone to injury from falls — especially as you age.

Stretching may help prevent injury. Preparing your muscles and joints for activity can protect you from injury, especially if your muscles or joints are tight.

Below are some quick and easy stretches you can do just about anywhere. To release tension, take frequent mini-breaks throughout your day and try a little stretching.

Stretch #1



Stand straight with your arms extended, feet shoulder width apart.



Reach to the right, keeping your hips still and moving only your upper torso (hold position for 2 - 5 seconds). You should feel a stretch in your external oblique muscle (down the left side of your torso).



Repeat on opposite side.

Stretch #2

Stand straight; feet shoulder width apart and hands reaching for the sky. Grab your left elbow with your right hand and slowly apply light pressure.



Lean your upper torso to the right (hold for 2 to 5 seconds).



Repeat on the opposite side.

Stretch #3

Take a ½ step forward with your right foot.

Slowly bend your left knee, placing your hands on your right upper thigh and extend your right toe towards the sky (you should feel a stretch in your right hamstring and glutes)

Lean back at the hips to feel a deeper stretch.

Hold for 2 - 5 seconds.



Repeat on the opposite side.

Stretch #4

Take a full step forward with your right foot.



Place your hands on your right thigh and slowly lunge forward (make sure your right knee does not break the plane of your right toes).

Your left leg should stay fully extended.

Hold for 2-5 seconds.

Repeat on the opposite side.

Stretch #5

Stand straight feet shoulder width apart placing both hands on your lower back.



Slowly lean back, making sure to support your lower back with your hands; for a deeper stretch gently push with your hands and extend back at the hips.

Hold for 2-5 seconds.