



How to do each stretch

Stretches A - Z

I recommend you hold stretches for around 30-60 seconds and repeat 2-3 times. You can also use your breaths too - hold for 6-8 breaths and move on. Some stretches may be easier to maintain than others. Keep your core tight and remember to breathe! Ultimately, listen to your body as you stretch and hold for what feels comfortable to you.



Arms across the chest

The arm-across-chest stretch is beneficial for eliminating shoulder pain. It can restore range of motion to the muscles running from the shoulder blade to the arm bone.

How to do it: Position your feet shoulder-width apart. Hold your right arm straight at shoulder height and stretch it across your chest. You will feel a stretch across the back of your shoulder. Pull your arm close to your chest and hold the position using your left hand.



Bridge

The bridge is a good beginner's bend that stretches both the front and strengthens the back of the body.

How to do it: Lie down on your back and place your feet hip-width apart. Press firmly on to your feet and lift your butt up off the mat. Interlace your hands together and press the fists down to the floor as you open up your chest even more.



Butterfly

The butterfly stretch can be a great exercise for people who want to find more flexibility in their hips and inner thighs. It stretches your inner legs, groin, hips, and lower back. A fantastic stretch to undo the slumping that's typically done at a computer all day.

How to do it: Sit up tall with the soles of your feet pressed together and your knees dropped to the sides as far as they will comfortably go. Grasp your feet with your hands, and you should feel the stretch spread throughout your inner thighs, the outermost part of your hips, and lower back.



Camel

Camel pose opens your chest, stretches your shoulders and abdominal wall. This stretch strengthens your neck, back, glutes and legs as well.

How to do it: Begin on your knees with your legs and feet hip-width apart. Place your hands behind you as if they were in the back pocket of your jeans. Engage your core and press your hips and thighs forward. Lift your chest and reach back, touching your heels with your hands. Look behind you as you hold the stretch, and release slowly. If you can't reach your heels, then leave your hands on your glutes. Just focus on your breath and try not to rush into this one.



Cat-Cow pose

With this simple movement, you are stretching the hips and the entire spine.

How to do it: Start on your hands and knees. While inhaling, lift your chest and tailbone towards the ceiling, and while exhaling, arch your back, pressing through the shoulder blades and dropping your head. Continue according to the rhythm of your breath.



Childs pose

Child's pose compresses your diaphragm, calming your body down to a restful state. It also relieves back pain by letting gravity take care of lengthening the space in between each vertebra. By bringing focus to your breath and simply closing your eyes, this stretch allows relaxation throughout the body and mind.

How to do it: Start on all fours then bring your knees and feet together as you sit your butt back to your heels and stretch your arms forward. Lower your forehead to the mat (or pillow if you prefer) and let your entire body release.



Cobra pose

The Cobra is a great stretch for toning the spine. When we sit a lot, the lower back tends to flatten, which can cause pain. Cobra stretch restores the natural curvature of the lower back.

How to do it: Start by laying on your stomach, feet hip-width apart, and bring the elbows under the shoulders. If there is too much pressure on your lower back, you can keep your elbows bent.



Downward Dog

Downward Dog is an excellent stretch for lengthening and decompressing the entire spine. It stretches the hamstrings as well, which will also help with lower back issues.

How to do it: Begin on your hands and knees, with your shoulder directly over your wrists. Your hips should align directly over your knees. Spread the fingers wide and ensure your weight is distributed evenly through the palms. On an exhale, tuck your toes under and extend the legs, lifting the hips toward the ceiling. Start with your knees bent, back straight and tailbone towards the ceiling. Slowly straighten and stretch one leg at a time back bringing the heel closer towards the ground.



Dorsi (Side) stretch

Standing Side Bend is a basic standing pose that stretches the spine and promotes better posture. Slouching over a computer or steering wheel and walking around with our head hanging over a cell phone has taught our backs to curve forward, our chest to be tight and our neck to be out of alignment. A stretch like standing side bend opens the entire torso and encourages you to stand taller.

How to do it: Stand tall with feet and legs together, or cross one leg behind the other for more stability. Reach both arms straight up overhead as you inhale. Exhale as you lengthen the left arm over the head, bending body gently to the right. Inhale to return arms overhead to centre and exhale as you repeat on the left side.



Extended side angle pose

Extended side angle or triangle is a beautiful standing stretch for the sides of the waist. It will open up the lungs, strengthen the legs and tone the entire body.

How to do it: Start standing with your feet one leg's length apart. Open and stretch your arms to the sides at shoulder height. Turn your right foot out 90 degrees and your left toes in about 45 degrees. Engage your legs and tummy as you hinge to the side over your right leg. Place your right hand down on your ankle, shin or knee and lift your left arm to the ceiling. Turn your nose up to the ceiling hand and hold. Lift to stand and repeat on the opposite side.



Frog

Stretching in frog pose opens the hips while strengthening the lower back, hips and groin. It also creates heart space in the chest and shoulders. This pose decreases any strain on the knees by opening the hip joints.

How to do it: From all fours, walk your knees as far apart as they will allow comfortably, without straining. Exhale, and while engaging your core,

lower down to your forearms, making sure your elbows are below your shoulders. Now allow your hips to fall back and down. Stay here and breathe deeply.

If this is too intense, try bringing your feet towards one another, big toes touching. Make sure your gaze is straight down. We want to keep the spine elongated, but we don't want to hurt the neck.



Full Body Stretch

A full body stretch helps boost energy in the body and benefits the arms and shoulders, lower back, pelvis and psoas muscles.

How to do it: Lie down on your back, stretch out the legs and relax for a few breaths. Inhale and stretch the arms above your head. Feel the stretch from the tips of the fingers, to the tops of the toes.



Half Split

Half split stretches the thighs, hamstrings, and groins. The benefits of the stretch are particularly helpful to runners, who tend to hold tightness in the legs.

How to do it: On an exhale, step your right foot forward. Lower down onto your left knee and release the top of the left foot on the ground. Flex your right foot, coming up onto the heel and

extending your toes back toward you, and begin to straighten your right leg as much as you comfortably can. Keep your hips square and over your left knee.

If it feels challenging to have the hands down on the ground, try walking the hands closer toward your body, which will decrease the intensity of the stretch.



Hamstrings

As a stretch, this is calming and relaxing. It can help with stress, anxiety, insomnia, headaches, and mild depression. Physically, the pose stretches the spine, shoulders, and hamstrings.

How to do it: Begin seated with both legs extended straight out in front of you, spine long. Open the legs, and tuck the left foot in with your knee bent. Inhale to extend your arms up

overhead and sit tall. As you exhale, hinge at your hips to fold forward over your right leg, maintaining a sense of length along your spine. Let the hands hold on to whatever is accessible while keeping a flat upper back: the calves, ankles, or perhaps the feet. With every inhale, find more length along your spine; with every exhale, move more deeply into your forward fold.



King Pigeon

Pigeon stretch, which can be a little challenging for newbies, stretches hip rotators and flexors. It may not seem like the obvious position to treat backache, but tight hips can contribute to lower back pain.

How to do it: Start in Downward-Facing Dog with your feet together. Then draw your left knee forward and turn it out to the left, so your left leg is

bent and near perpendicular to your right one-lower both legs to the ground. You can simply keep your back right leg extended straight behind you, or for an added



hamstring stretch — carefully pull your back foot off the ground and in toward your back. Hold the position, then switch to the other side, and repeat.

If you struggle, then leg pulls are a milder version of this stretch and a great alternative.



Knee to chest

This pose is best at adding more diaphragmatic space in the lower spine where most of us have tension.

How to do it: From lying on the floor, bring your knee to your chest and wrap your arms around your leg, giving yourself a big hug. Inhale, and roll your shoulders down, away from the ears and underneath you. Exhale as you use the strength

of your arms to squeeze and gently press the thigh down towards the core. Tuck the chin to elongate the top of the spine on the neck. Release and repeat on the other side.

If it's comfortable for you, try gently rocking from side to side, massaging the back of the spine, giving yourself some self-love!



Leg pulls

If the hips are tight, the movement we need tends to come from the back, which results in back pain. When the hips and hamstrings are open, this can help alleviate the lower back pain as well. Leg pulls stretch the hips, outer thighs, lower back and spine. It's also a milder, modified version of the Pigeon pose.

How to do it: To start, lay on the floor, and bring the soles of the feet on the ground, feet hip-distance apart. Place your right ankle on the left thigh, and keep the foot flexed throughout the stretch. Take your right arm in between the space of the legs, and the left arm outside the left thigh. Interlace the fingers either behind your knee, or on top of the shin, depending on the space available to you. Keep the back and shoulders relaxed. Hold the stretch and change sides when you are ready.



One-legged downward facing dog

Downward-Facing Dog is one of the most well-known yoga poses for a reason—almost anyone can do it, and is a fantastic stretching and strengthening exercise for the entire body. It stretches the torso, strengthens the arms and legs, and rests and rejuvenates the brain. Three-Legged Downward-Facing Dog provides all the



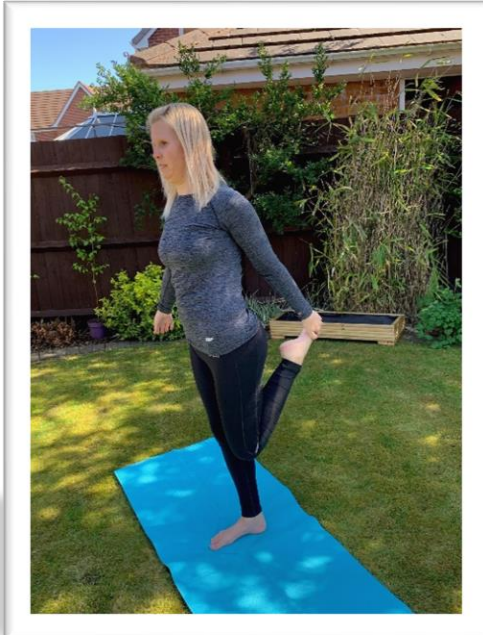
great benefits of Down Dog, but also stretches the inner and outer hip, side body, and improves balance.

How to do it: Begin on hands and knees, with your shoulders aligned directly over your wrists, and your hips directly over your knees. Spread the fingers wide, and distribute the weight evenly through the palms. On an exhale, tuck your toes under and begin to slowly extend the legs, lifting the hips toward the ceiling. Keep the knees bent for as long as you need to here to maintain the length along the spine. Continue lifting the hips high and back, and press the tops of your thighs toward the back of the room.

On an inhale, extend your right leg up high and back, lifting it toward the ceiling. Avoid the tendency to tilt the pelvis and open up through the hips immediately to lift the leg as high as possible; instead, keep the hips level with one another, the right foot heel reaching back and the toes pointing down toward the ground.

You can remain here with the hips level if this feels like enough—or, to move even deeper, begin to bend your right knee so that your foot drops over to the left. Point your bent knee up toward the ceiling. Begin to open up and move your hips directly on top of one another.

Hold the stretch then slowly square off the hips and lower the extended leg on an exhale. Gently walk out the legs in Downward-Facing Dog, then repeat on the other side.



Quad stretch

Stretching the quads is recommended for people who sit for long periods, and it is a good stretch for the back too.

How to do it: Stand on one leg. If you need help, hold onto something solid, like the wall or a chair, for support. Bend your right knee and bring your heel toward your buttock. Reach for your ankle with your opposite (left) hand. Stand up straight and pull in your abdominal muscles. Try to keep your knees next to each other. Don't lock your standing knee during the stretch. Keep it soft. Relax your shoulders. Breathe deeply and hold the stretch, release and repeat on the left leg, this time holding your ankle with your right hand.



Ragdoll

Sometimes called a forward fold, the upward forward bend stretches the hamstrings and back muscles while providing a release for tight, tense shoulders.

How to do it: Stand straight with feet shoulder-width apart and your knees soft, not locked. While you exhale, hinge at your waist and bend forward, reaching toward the mat. Don't worry if you can't reach to the floor at first; just stop wherever your hamstrings feel a comfortable stretch.



Runners Lunge

Runners lunge or Low Lunge is a great pose to stretch out tight quadriceps, hamstrings, groin and hips, and encourages a full range of motion in the lower body. Perfect for runners and cyclists, as well as those who sit at desks all day.

How to do it: On an exhale, step your right foot forward between your hands. Lower down onto your left knee and release the top of the left foot

on the ground. Ensure that the right knee is directly over the right ankle, and isn't moving forward toward the toes or outward to the left or right. Keep the knee directly over the ankle if it feels like enough for your body—you should feel a comfortable stretch along the left front thigh and groin. For a deeper stretch, you can inch the right foot forward on the mat until you find an edge that feels appropriate for your body.

Take your fingertips to the ground on either side of your hips. You can also rest both hands on the front knee if taking the fingers down feels like too much. Relax your shoulders away from your ears. As you continue to breathe deeply, soften the weight of your body down into your hips, and draw your tailbone down toward the ground.

Feel free to remain here, with your hands on your knee or your fingertips beside you for support. If you feel happy, then experiment with extending one or both arms up alongside your ears (as shown above).



Seated spinal twist

Seated spinal twist is a restorative yoga pose that promotes proper digestion and encourages spinal mobility. Twisting postures help tone the belly, massage internal organs and can help relieve lower back pain.

How to do it: Sit upright on your mat. Extend the legs in front of you and rest your hands on your thighs. Bend your right knee, then cross your right leg over and place your foot next to your left thigh. You should feel as though you're sitting in a tight half cross-legged position. Bend your left knee and position your left ankle next to your right glute. Your right foot should stay planted on the floor. Square your hips, so they remain even. Reach your right arm behind you and place your fingertips on the floor, gently twisting your body to the right. Raise your left arm upward. Hook your left arm around your bent right knee. Take a deep breath and exhale as you twist further to the right. With each exhale, twist your body further. Gently release from the stretch and then repeat on the other side.



Seated neck tilt

This gentle stretch targets the sides of your neck.

How to do it: Sit on the floor in a cross-legged position, or a chair with your feet flat on the ground. Extend your right arm next to your right knee or along the right side of the chair. Place your left hand on the top of your head and slowly tilt your head to the left. Apply gentle pressure with your hand to increase the stretch. To feel a deeper stretch, you can hold onto your right knee or the seat of the chair. This stabilizes the torso and allows you to isolate the stretch on the side of your neck. Hold on this side, then slowly lift your head and repeat this stretch on the other side.



Supine Twist

A twist to the spine offers an excellent tension reliever for the entire back, as well as the neck. Plus, you get to lie down, relax and let the gravity help you.

How to do it: Lie on your back and place your arms in a T-shape. Bring your knees to your chest. Slowly lower both knees to the left, keeping the neck neutral or turning the gaze away from the knees. Try to keep both shoulders on the floor. If the top knee lifts too much, you can place a block or a bolster between the knees. Hold, and repeat on the other side.



Table Top

Table top stretch helps to lengthen and realign the spine.

How to do it: Come to the floor on your hands and knees. Bring the knees hip-width apart, with the feet directly behind the knees. Bring the palms directly under the shoulders with the fingers facing forward. Look down between the palms and allow the back to be flat. Press into

the palms to drop the shoulders slightly away from the ears. Press the tail bone towards the back wall and the crown of the head towards the front wall to lengthen the spine.

Stay in this position if you want to, but you can deepen the stretch by extending your left arm and right leg outwards, reaching as far as you can and engaging the core muscles. Hold, and then repeat on the other side.



Thread the needle

Thread the needle is a safe and effective way to stretch the hips, particularly the piriformis muscle. Releasing tension in the hips helps to create a sense of physical ease throughout the entire body, particularly in the knees and low back.

How to do it: Begin on your hands and knees. Place your wrists directly under your shoulders and your knees directly under your hips. Point your fingertips to the top of your mat. Place your shins and knees hip-width apart. Centre your head in a neutral position and soften your gaze downward. On an exhalation, slide your right arm underneath your left arm with your palm facing up. Let your right shoulder come all the way down to the mat. Rest your right ear and cheek on the mat, then gaze toward your left. Keep your left elbow lifting and your hips raised. Do not press your weight onto your head; instead, adjust your position, so you do not strain your neck or shoulder. Let your upper back broaden. Soften and relax your lower back. Allow all of the tension in your shoulders, arms, and neck to drain away. Hold. Then repeat the pose on the opposite side for the same length of time.



Tree Pose

Tree pose is an awesome standing balance for beginners to work on to gain focus and learn to breathe while standing and keeping the body balanced on one foot.

How to do it: Start with your feet together and place your right foot on your inner left upper thigh. Press your hands in prayer and find a spot in front of you that you can hold in a steady gaze. Hold

and breathe then switch sides. Make sure you don't lean into the standing leg and keep your abdominals engaged and shoulders relaxed.



Warrior pose

Warrior is an external hip opener and opens up the inner thighs and groin. It's a good warming stretch for the side and leads nicely into a triangle, extended angle and side stretch.

How to do it: Stand with your feet one leg's length apart. Turn your right toes out 90 degrees and your left toes in 45 degrees. Bend your right knee until it is directly over your right ankle while

keeping the torso even between the hips. Stretch your arms out to your sides and gaze over your right hand. Hold before straightening the right leg and turning your feet to the other side to repeat on the left side.