



STRETCHING GUIDE TO EASE TIGHT MUSCLES

No matter how active or sedentary your lifestyle, tight muscles are a common cause of discomfort, limited mobility and even pain. Without proper flexibility, your body tends to overuse certain muscle groups to compensate for tightness or weakness in other areas. This overcompensation can not only exacerbate existing muscle stiffness but also lead to pain in different parts of your body.

Practicing stretches that target common areas of muscle tightness will help encourage good posture, enhance your range of motion, reduce the overuse of certain muscle groups, relieve discomfort and support quality rest.

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COMMON AREAS OF MUSCLE TIGHTNESS

Upper Trapezius

Spanning from the neck to the shoulder blades, the trap muscles help to move your shoulder blades, stabilize your arms and extend your neck. Repetitive activities that use your shoulders like lifting heavy objects and swimming can cause tightness in your traps.

Stretch: Head Tilt

1. Tilt your head to one side and allow gravity to gently pull your head down, with your ear toward your shoulder.
2. Ensure your shoulders remain heavy and relaxed.
3. Repeat on the other side.



Latissimus Dorsi

Located on the sides of the mid back, the lat muscles connect your upper arms to your lower back. These muscles help with arm movements like pulling and throwing and support good posture. In addition to the stretches below, strengthening your hip and core muscles can reduce over-reliance on your lats.

Stretch: Child's Pose

1. Begin on your hands and knees and push your hips backward onto your heels.
2. From this kneeling position lower your chest toward the ground and extend your arms forward on the mat, allowing your thighs and the mat to support the front of your body.
3. Walk your hands to one side of the mat, stretching out the lats on the opposite side of your body.
4. Repeat on the other side.



COMMON AREAS OF MUSCLE TIGHTNESS

Stretch: Pin Wheel

1. Lie on one side with your knees bent toward your chest.
2. Extend both arms straight out at shoulder height and gently reach your top arm further forward. Then slowly lift your top arm to begin arching upward toward your head.
3. Move your arm in a moon shape starting from the front of your body, then over your head and back toward your hips.
4. Slowly return to the starting position and repeat. With each arch, pause at the tight region and breathe deeply and slowly.
5. Repeat on the other side.



Pectoral

Tightness in the pectoral muscles most commonly results from poor posture and a stiff upper back. Situated in your chest, the pectoralis major and pectoralis minor muscles support arm movement and deep breathing. Stretching your pecs, minimizing hunched posture and increasing spinal mobility will encourage a more “open” chest to help reduce muscle tightness and discomfort.

Stretch: T with Foam Roll

1. Recline on the foam roll with it directly underneath your spine, so it supports your tailbone and head.
2. Bring your arms outward into a T position to stretch the front of your chest.



COMMON AREAS OF MUSCLE TIGHTNESS

Stretch: Y with Foam Roll

1. Recline on the foam roll with it directly underneath your spine, so it supports your tailbone and head.
2. Place your arms in a Y position and allow the small muscle from your chest to arm to relax.



Shoulder Blades, Thoracic Spine, Ribcage

A stiff thoracic spine, or upper back, can cause tightness and discomfort in your shoulder blades and ribcage, too. This rigidity in your upper body can make breathing difficult and uncomfortable as well as impair your posture and athletic performance.

Stretch: Telescope Arms

1. Lie on one side with your knees bent toward your chest.
2. Extend both arms straight out at shoulder height and gently reach your top arm further forward, stretching the back of your shoulder blades.
3. Then glide your top arm across and behind your body to reach toward your backside. Keep your bottom arm pressed to the ground.
4. Pause at areas of tightness and breathe deeply and slowly.
5. Repeat on the other side.



COMMON AREAS OF MUSCLE TIGHTNESS

Lumbar Spine

Immobility in the lumbar spine, or lower back, is one of the most common sources of back stiffness. The stretches below promote spinal mobility in multiple directions while utilizing breath and activating your abdominal muscles.

Stretch: Cat Camel



1. Begin on your hands and knees with hands underneath your shoulders and knees underneath your hips.
2. Keep your arms straight and pull your shoulders down, away from your ear lobes.
3. Engage your abdominal muscles to stretch the lumbar spine upward. Exhale slowly as your spine rounds.
4. Return to a flat-back position and repeat the stretch.

Stretch: Swan

1. Begin by lying on your stomach.
2. Place your hands beside your shoulders and hug your elbows in toward your ribs.
3. Gently lift up your torso by pushing your hands into the floor, stretching your abdomen, back and hips.
4. Keep your head lifted and neck relaxed while pulling your shoulders down, away from your ear lobes.



COMMON AREAS OF MUSCLE TIGHTNESS

Gluteal, Piriformis, Quadriceps

The gluteal and piriformis muscles span the back of the hips, and the quadriceps muscles run along the thigh. In addition to stretching these muscles, building strength in your upper body and abdomen can help relieve tightness in your hips and thighs.

Stretch: Figure Four

1. Lie on your back and bend your knees to place your feet flat on the floor, with your heels close to your hips.
2. Cross one ankle over the opposite knee.
3. Lace your hands behind the thigh of your grounded leg and lift up this leg to stretch the back of the hip.
4. Repeat on the other side.



Stretch: Quadriceps

1. Lie on your stomach with your legs extended.
2. Lift one heel toward your hips and grab your ankle, gently pulling your ankle toward your hip to stretch the front of your thigh.
3. Slowly return to the starting position and repeat on the other side.

