

Here are some general guidelines to bear in mind when following a flexibility program...

- You should be thoroughly warmed up before performing these exercises
- Stretch to just before the point of discomfort
- The feeling of tightness should diminish as you hold the stretch
- Breath out into the stretch. Avoid breath holding
- Hold each stretch for 10-30 seconds
- If tightness intensifies or you feel pain stop the stretch
- Shake out limbs between stretches
- Complete 2-3 stretches before moving onto the next exercise

Upper Body Flexibility Exercises



Stretch #1 Shoulder & Chest

This can be performed kneeling or standing. Clasp hands behind back and straighten arms. Raise hands as high as possible and bend forward from the waist and hold.

Stretch #2 Arm Across Chest

Place one arm straight across chest. Place hand on elbow and pull arm towards chest and hold. Repeat with other arm.



Stretch #3 Triceps Stretch

Place one hand behind back with elbow in air. Place other hand on elbow and gently pull towards head. Hold and repeat with other arm.

Lower Body Flexibility Exercises

Stretch #4 Glute Stretch

Sitting on floor with right leg bent, place right foot over left leg. Place left arm over right leg so elbow can be used to push right knee. Hold and repeat for other side.



Stretch #5 Adductor Stretch

Stand with feet as wide apart as is comfortable. Shift weight to one side as knee bends. Reach towards extended foot and hold. Repeat for other side.

Stretch #6 Single Leg Hamstring

Place leg out straight and bend the other so your foot is flat into your thigh. Bend forward from the waist keeping your back flat. Hold and repeat with the other leg.



Stretch #7 Standing Quadriceps

Standing on one leg grab the bottom of one leg (just above ankle). Pull heel into buttocks and push the hips out. Your thigh should be perpendicular to the ground. Hold and repeat with the other leg.

Stretch #8 Standing Calf

Place feet in front of each other about 18 inches apart. Keep back leg straight and heel on the floor. Push against a wall to increase the stretch. Hold and repeat with other leg.



Full Back Stretch

1. Lie on your back and bring both your knees to your chest with hands clasped under back of knees.
2. Roll forwards until your feet touch the floor and then immediately roll back until just before your head touches the floor.
3. Continue until you complete 10-15 full rolls.



Basic Abdominal Exercises

Basic strength in the stomach can be developed with following abdominal exercises. Start by aiming for 1-3 sets of 10 repetitions three times per week and gradually build up to 20-25 repetitions.

Static Contraction

- 1) Lying flat on your back bend your knees bent so feet are flat on the floor.
- 2) Contract your stomach muscles and try to push the small of your back into the floor.
- 3) Hold for a count of 5 seconds remembering to breathe gently. Relax and repeat for the desired number of repetitions.

Keep your neck and face relaxed. Many people have a tendency to hold their breath during this exercise which can increase blood pressure.

Wrist Ups

- 1) Lying flat on your back bend your knees to right angles keeping your feet flat on the floor.
 - 2) Place your palms on your thighs and sit up until your fingertips reach your knees as you breathe out. Return to the start position and repeat for the desired number of repetitions.
- Imagine you have an apple under your chin. That's about the distance your chin should stay away from your chest during the movement.

Once you can comfortably perform the basic abdominal exercises above try the more advanced exercises. Again start by aiming for 2-3 sets of 10-12 repetitions and progress to 20-25 repetitions per set.

Double Crunches

- 1) Lie back onto floor or bench with knees bent and hands behind head. Keep elbows back and out of sight. Head should be in a neutral position with a space between chin and chest.
- 2) Start position: Hands behind head and knees bent at 90 degrees.
3. Leading with the chin and chest towards the ceiling, contract the abdominals and raise shoulders off floor or bench. During the crunch, also bring knees towards chest.
- 4) Return to start position and repeat.
- 5) Remember to keep head and back in a neutral position. Hyperextension or flexion of either may cause injury.



Hundred Breaths Exercise

This isometric exercise is taken from Pilates and is excellent for developing static strength in the core region.

1. Lie face up on a mat with arms by your sides. Bend legs to 90 degrees. Lift your head and shoulders off mat and take 5 short, consecutive inhales, followed by 5 short, consecutive exhales.
2. At the same time, lift arms off mat and pulse them in unison with the breath with palms face up on inhale and down on exhale.
3. Repeat 10 times for a total of 100 breaths.

