



Passive Stretching – Upper Body

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Whether it's strength conditioning or aerobic exercise, stretching is a key component to every workout. Stretching allows your muscles to relax and elongate. Muscles that are not stretched after exercising increase the risk of injury. Non-stretched muscles are tight and lose their elasticity. If an action calls for a larger range of motion, a non-stretched muscle can tear due to the loss of elasticity.

Stretches should be done every day whether you exercise or not. Stretching loosens the body's muscles. As we age, our muscles lose their elasticity. But, if we stretch every day, our muscles keep more of their 'rubber band' like qualities. Another good reason to stretch every day is to release tension in the body. Those jobs that require us to sit at a desk all day keep our posture muscles working constantly - causing them to shorten. Stretching these muscles from time to time aids in relieving stress building up, tension headaches, and allows you to take your mind off work for a few minutes. Most of the following stretches can be done sitting down making them

more convenient to do anywhere.

There are several different types of stretching. Good ones, and ones that lead to greater risk of injury. First and foremost, *never* do any ballistic stretching. Ballistic stretching incorporates 'bouncing' movement through a stretch. The 'bouncing' in ballistic stretching activates the stretch reflex in your muscles. This reflex shortens your muscle, which leads to tearing as you continue to bounce.

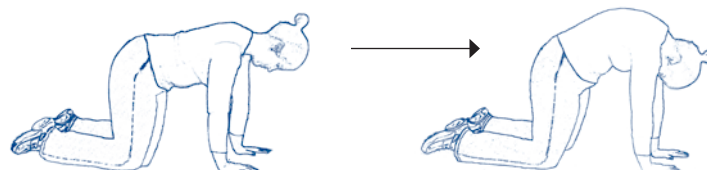
The most common type of stretching is passive stretching. Passive stretching is when you assume a stretching position and supply any support by yourself or an object such as a towel or the floor. Passive stretching can help relieve muscle spasms and reduce the amount of muscle soreness after a workout. Below are some examples of passive stretching for the upper body. Each stretch should be held for at least 30 seconds.



Lateral Neck Stretch: Tilt your head to the right side. Reach over with your right hand to the left side of your head. Gently pull downward till you feel slight discomfort. Repeat on the opposite side



Upper Back Stretch: Position yourself on your hands and knees. Your hands should be directly under your shoulders and your knees should be no wider than your hips. Your back should be flat in the starting position, not arched. From here, round your back upward. Your head should hang toward the floor.



(over)

Posterior Neck Stretch: Tilt your head forward. Place both hands on the back of your head and pull downward until you feel slight discomfort.



Shoulder Stretch: Reach your right arm across your chest. Place your left hand on your tricep and pull your right arm closer to your chest. Be sure to keep your shoulder down – do not ‘shrug’. Repeat on the opposite side.



Chest Stretch: Grasp a towel behind your back. Bend slightly forward and gently raise your arms upward. If you require more of a stretch, grasp your hands behind your back instead of a towel. Be sure to keep your stomach muscles engaged to keep from arching your back.

