

the essential daily

4 STRETCH EXERCISES

Modern living is relatively sedentary and we generally spend far too long sitting in front of computers with very little movement. Our bodies are not designed for this, instead we are supposed to be moving around, stretching and being more mobile. This is why there is such a trend towards back, shoulder and posture problems as well as tension headaches, RSI etc. This guide gives you 4 basic stretch exercises to do every day to maintain posture, prevent back pain, strengthen your legs and reinvigorate the body. You'll be amazed how 15 minutes of stretching can transform the quality of your day.

KNEE EXERCISES

- ☆ *Great for knees that feel stiff and creaky in the morning*
- ☆ *Good for those who spend the whole day sitting*
- ☆ *Warms and strengthens the knee joints*

It is important that throughout the movement you keep your knees directly over your feet and do not twist them to the side. This routine should be performed 30-50 times. At first you may only be able to do 10 but don't worry, just try and do a few extra every day and your knees will gather strength and stop creaking.

- 1** Stand with your feet and knees together (slightly bent). Rest your palms on your knees with your fingers pointing to each other.
- 2** Begin to slowly squat down, keeping your knees and feet glued together. The heels will naturally come off the ground. Stop once your thighs are parallel with the ground.
- 3** Straighten your legs until you return to the start position.



SPINE EXERCISES

- ☆ *Align muscles and ligaments along the spine*
- ☆ *Regulate Acupuncture meridians that help keep our spines strong and posture correct*
- ☆ *Correct spine posture improves nerve function to all of our organs to bring a feeling of health, strength and peace*



This routine should be performed 28 times (14 times on each side).

- 1 Start in a neutral, standing position with your shoulders back and down, chin slightly tucked in. Place heels together and point feet away from each other, about 45 degrees from the midline.
- 2 Position hands and arms as in pictures. The lower hand should rest against the top of the hip bone.
- 3 As you inhale, move the hands away from each other. Your lower hand should slide straight down your leg (like a pump) without moving forward or backwards. The top hand should move straight upwards above your head without moving forward, backwards or sideways.
- 4 Your arms should be completely extended by the time you complete your inhale and your back should be completely straight.
- 5 As you breathe out, turn your hands so that your palms face each other and move them towards each other, crossing just below your chest (your hand which is moving up should be closest to your body).
- 6 When the hand moving upwards reaches the top of your head, start to turn the palm so that it rolls onto the top of your head. Your lower hand should also move around your waist. This should bring you to a mirrored position of step 2 and should coincide with full exhalation.
- 7 Repeat steps 3 - 6.

LOWER BACK EXERCISES

LOWER BACK I

These stretches elongate the muscles along your spine. Perform this exercise twice.

- 1 Lie on your back with your back straight.
- 2 Pull one knee towards your chest. Hold it there for 20 seconds and return to the starting position. Repeat for the other knee.
- 3 Pull both knees to your chest. Lift your head and look at your belly button. Hold for 20 seconds before returning to starting position



LOWER BACK II

This movement stretches the lower back and glutes. Perform this exercise twice on each side.

- 1 Lie on back with back straight and knees bent.
- 2 Place right hand on your left knee and stretch your left arm out to the side.
- 3 Rotate and drop your legs to the right and turn your head to look along your left arm. Apply downward pressure with your right hand and hold for 20 seconds. Return to starting position and repeat on the other side.



LOWER BACK III

This exercise helps to stretch and strengthen the lower back. Perform this exercise twice on each side

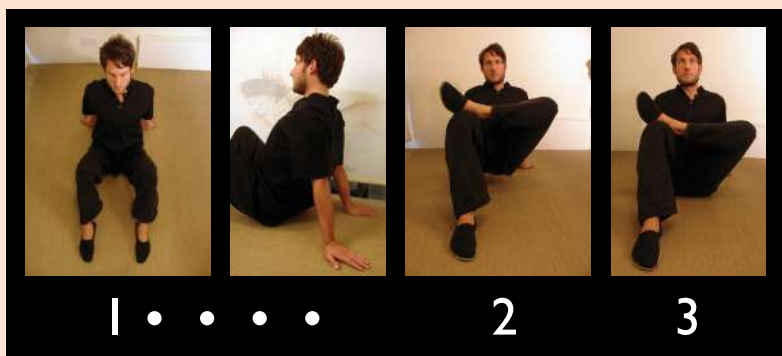
- 1 Stand with feet apart just wider than shoulder width.
- 2 Lift your left arm and begin to slide your right hand down your right thigh. Go as far as is comfortable and then turn your head to look at your left fingertips. Hold for 20 seconds
- 3 Return to starting position and repeat on the other side.



LOWER BACK IV

This exercise targets the glutes which are responsible for around 80% of lower back dysfunction and pain. When these muscles are balanced, your legs are in a neutral position which provides a sturdy and stress free base for your body. Perform this exercise twice on each side.

- 1 Sit with your knees bent and your arms behind you as in pictures.
- 2 Lift left leg and bottom off the ground and place left ankle on your right knee.
- 3 Keep back straight (not rounded) and slowly sit down, bringing chest towards knee. You should feel a deep stretch in the left glutes. Hold for 20 seconds. Return to the starting position and repeat for the other leg.



LUNG MERIDIAN EXERCISES

- ☆ *Improve upper body posture*
- ☆ *Encourage proper placement of head and shoulders*
- ☆ *Expand the chest for improved breathing*
- ☆ *Helps gather QI from air and improve energy*
- ☆ *Releases tension in shoulder, arms and neck*

Perform in the morning to gather the STIRRING YANG QI for energy and again at night to harness the YIN energy to quiet the mind before sleep. The lung routines should be performed slowly with the breath. Each sequence should be performed 9 times.

LUNG I

- 1 Stand with feet shoulder width apart and parallel to each other. Place shoulders in a neutral position (back and down) and arms by your side (palms facing forward).
- 2 Inhale and raise arms in front and up until they are above your head (palms facing backwards). Ideally you should reach this position at the completion of your inhale.
- 3 Exhale and bring your arms back and down, allowing your palms to face forwards and your fingers to stretch backwards. The movement should return you to the starting position and should last as long as your exhale. You should feel a tingling in your fingers - in Chinese Medicine this means that the meridians have been opened and QI is flowing.



LUNG II

- 1 Stand in same starting position.
- 2 Bring fingers and thumb together and place in the nooks of the shoulders below collarbone.
- 3 As you inhale, bring elbows forward and up until they reach their highest point. Then stretch your arms up above your head (palms facing backwards). This whole movement should take one full inhalation.
- 4 Repeat step 3 of LUNG I routine.



LUNG III

- 1 Start in the same position as the previous routines.
- 2 Repeat step 2 of the LUNG II routine but do not extend arms above head. Instead keep your elbows bent in the raised position.
- 3 Exhale and move the elbows back, out and down, finishing by the rib cage.

