

MAC Complementary Health Clinic

Revitalizing Neck and Back Stretches



Free stretching Booklet.

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The Back Arch: One Of The Key Stretching Exercises For Back Pain

🧘🧘🧘 There are many Chinese stretching exercises for back pain. This is not surprising given that back pain and stiffness are such common ailments. The Back Arch is a **simple yet effective** stretching exercise for the back that, like most of the exercises on this site, provides **multiple benefits** if you do it regularly - even when you *don't* have back pain.

If you have back or neck problems though or you haven't exercised for some time **check with your health professional** before trying this or any other new back exercises. Also included below are links to other stretching exercises for back pain, as well as neck and leg pain, on this site. It is recommended that you try them all to see which ones work best for your particular situation.

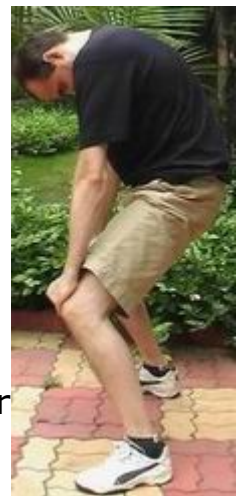
Back Arch Stretching Exercise

How

1. Stand with your feet about shoulder width apart and your toes pointing outwards. Rest your hands on your thighs just above your knees, with your fingers and thumbs facing inwards.

Take a slow, deep breath through your nose. Exhale through your mouth as you *slowly* and *gently* bend your head down towards your chest and push your hips and pelvis forward.

Feel your entire spine stretching from your neck to your lower back and sacrum. Stretch as far as you *comfortably* can and until you have fully exhaled. This should take about 4 or 5 seconds. Pause for a second or two.



2. Breathe in through your nose as you *slowly* and *smoothly* raise your head up.

Continue until you are looking above and behind your body.

At the same time tilt your hips and pelvis back so that your backside is sticking up in the air.

Arch your spine as far as you *comfortably* can.

Hold the position for a couple of seconds.



3. Exhale through your mouth as you *slowly* and *gently* lower your head and your backside into the back stretching position in step 1, i.e. with your head resting near your chest and your hips and pelvis pushed forward.

Continue to alternately stretch and arch your back 5 to 10 times to begin.

Build up to 15 to 20 times in a session or simply do it for a few minutes at a time.



Benefits


- Limbers & stretches your back & neck muscles
- Stimulates your spinal nerves
- Aligns your vertebrae
- Promotes blood flow
- Relieves back & neck pain & stiffness

Tips

- Proceed slowly, smoothly & gently throughout the exercise
- When arching back imagine your head and backside are touching
- *Stop* if you feel any pain or dizziness
- Breathe slowly & smoothly throughout the exercise

Abdominal Stretching and Back Stretching In One Exercise!



 This multi-benefit abdominal stretching exercise is called the Forward-Backward Bend.

It **stretches the front *and* back of the body**, making it a perfectly balanced abdominal stretching-back stretching exercise.

You should **check with your health professional first** though, especially if you have a history of abdominal, back or neck problems or you haven't exercised for some time.

Forward Backward Bend

How

1. Stand with your feet parallel, about hip width apart, and your arms hanging loosely by your sides.

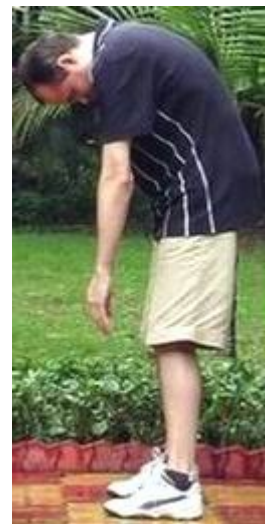
Look straight ahead. Slightly bend your knees (keeping your legs locked straight can strain your lower back).

Keep your weight mostly on the front of your feet.

2. Gently exhale through your mouth as you slowly bend forward.

First, bend your neck till your chin is near your chest. Continue by progressively bending forward...first your upper back, then your mid back, followed by your lower back.

Your arms simply hang loosely in front of your body.



3. Bend as far as you *comfortably* can.

Take 3 slow, deep breaths in this position.

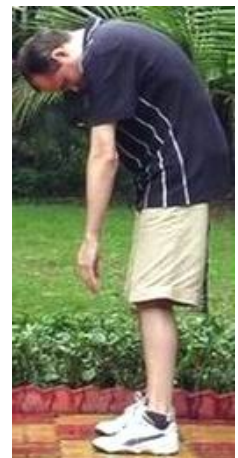
As you hang there let go of any tension in your body.

Feel your back stretching...your legs stretching...and blood flowing to your head.

You may close your eyes, but be careful you don't lose balance.



To tighten your belly, each time you exhale use your abs to pull your belly in. Relax your belly as you inhale.



4. Take a fourth breath. As you exhale, *slowly* and *smoothly* start to rise up.

Imagine you're unrolling your spine up a wall - from lower to mid to upper back & neck until you're standing upright again. Try to keep your weight on the front of your feet as you rise up.

Also, breathe smoothly and evenly through your nose and time your breathing so that you finish the exhalation as you reach the upright position.

Once standing, you can take a slow, deep breath or two if you like, or you can proceed straight to the next step...the **abdominal stretching** part of the exercise.

5. Immediately begin to *slowly* and *smoothly* raise your arms straight up in front of your body.

Breathe in at the same time.



6. As you raise your arms, lift your head and arch your spine back in one smooth,

Arch back as far as you *comfortably*

Exhale. Hold the position while you take 3 slow, deep breaths.

As you breathe, feel your arms and stretching.

As you exhale the third time, *slowly smoothly* straighten your body, arms and bring them down past the body until you're once again in the starting position, with arms hanging your sides.



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abs

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That's one round.

Repeat steps 2 to 5 for a total of 3 rounds. Build up to 10 or 12 rounds in a session.

Benefits


- Stretches & strengthens your abs, spine & backs of legs
- Firms & tones your abs & belly
- Massages your abdominal organs
- Increases blood flow to your brain
- Improves your sleep when done just before bed

Tips

- Minor variations in technique are okay. Just do it *slowly, smoothly & comfortably*
- If you feel dizzy, *stop*, breathe deeply & try again or later
- If the backs of your legs are very tight, stand with your feet double shoulder-width, or more, apart

The **Forward-Backward Bend** is a remarkable exercise not just for its back and abdominal stretching benefits. Its ability to increase blood flow to the head and face *and* massage the abdominal muscles and organs **leads to better overall health**. See for yourself.

Back Stretching Exercises Like The Back Twist Benefit Your Entire Spine

 The **Back Twist** is one of the **best back stretching exercises** you can do - not just for your lower back, but *also* your upper back, neck, hips and waist.

The gentle, rhythmic, side to side twisting action **aligns your vertebrae, limbers your muscles, loosens your hips** and **enhances blood circulation**.

However, if you have back or neck problems or you haven't exercised for some time **check with your health professional first**.

Back Twist Back Stretching Exercise

How

1. Stand with your back straight and your feet parallel, about shoulder width apart.

Slightly bend your knees.



Sink your weight into your legs.

Let your arms hang loosely by your sides.

Look straight ahead.

2. Gently twist your upper body and head to the RIGHT until you are looking directly behind you.

Forget about your arms and hands....let them move on their own from the force your upper body generates as it turns.

Keep your legs and feet pointing ahead throughout the whole exercise...it's your upper body and arms that move.

To help you remain straight during the exercise and not sway backwards or forwards, or from one leg to the other, imagine there's a pole running through your body, from the top of your head, down your spine and into the ground between your feet.

Your body simply twists on this imaginary pole.



3. Slowly turn back towards the front and continue around to the LEFT until you are once again looking directly behind you. Continue twisting back and forth from side to side.

Remember to let your arms move on their own as you turn. Don't pause at any stage of the exercise. GRADUALLY build up speed and torque in your hips and upper body. Your arms will begin to swing out wide and your hands will slap your sides as you twist.

Do 10-15 twists per side. Build up to 30-40 per side or simply do the exercise for a couple of minutes at a time.



When you've finished don't suddenly stop. GRADUALLY slow down and return to the starting position (step 1) and let your arms swing until they eventually fall naturally by your sides again. Take a few slow, deep breaths before moving on to one of the other back stretching exercises on this site.


Benefits

- Aligns your vertebrae
- Stretches & loosens your back & neck
- Limbers your hips & waist
- Enhances blood flow

Tips

- Some variation in technique is okay
- Start *slowly & gently*, then build speed
- *Stop* if you experience pain or dizziness
- Do it any time of the day or night to limber and energize
- An excellent warm up exercise before sports

Upper Back Stretching Exercises That Are Quick, Effective and Easy

 Upper back stretching exercises like the **Upper Back Stretch** take just seconds to do and are multi beneficial. The upper back and neck is a chronically tight area for many people.

This exercise **loosens** the **upper vertebrae, muscles and shoulders** to **relieve stiffness, pain** and **tension** in the area.

However, if you have a history of upper back or neck problems or you haven't exercised for some time, **check with your health professional** before trying this or other neck or back stretching exercises.

Upper Back Stretch

How

1. Stand with your feet parallel and about shoulder width apart.

Hold your hands behind your back with your fingers interlocked.

2. Breathe in *slowly* and *smoothly* through your nose as you begin the stretch by trying to touch your elbows together.

At the same time, bend your head forward a little. This helps to lengthen and stretch your upper back and neck.

Feel your chest and shoulders expanding too.

Hold the position for several seconds.

3. Breathe out *slowly* and *smoothly* (through your nose) as you *gently* drop your arms and hands to your sides and relax your upper back and shoulders.

Repeat the exercise three or four times, several times a day, whenever you have upper back pain or stiffness. Also, do it regularly to prevent the build up of tension in this area.

Benefits

- Loosens upper back vertebrae, muscles and shoulders
- Releases upper back tension

Tips

- Stretch *slowly* & *gently*
- *Stop* if you feel any pain

NEW Stretches for Upper Back



Here's one of the best sore neck and shoulder stretches you can do, especially when combined with the above Upper Back Stretch:

- 1.** Stand straight with your feet parallel and about waist-width apart. Put the backs of your hands on your lower back, and interlock your fingers. Your elbows should now be pointing out to the sides.
- 2.** Start "flapping" your elbows forwards and backwards in a smooth, rhythmic action just like wings. Breathe smoothly and evenly through your nose. Continue for 1-2 minutes. Repeat 2-3 times a day. This exercise loosens your upper back, chest, shoulders and the base of your neck.
- 3.** Also try Shoulder Rolling. Stand with your arms hanging by your sides. Using your shoulder muscles only, lift and roll your shoulders in forward circles, then backward circles 10-15 times each way for another effective shoulder and upper back loosener.

The Neck Twist: A Stiff Neck Exercise That Loosens and Strengthens

The Neck Twist is an **effective stiff neck exercise** that relieves pain by loosening and stretching the neck muscles and tendons and stimulating the nerves in the cervical vertebrae. This particular stiff neck exercise can be done standing or sitting. **Check with your health professional first** though if you have a history of neck problems or you haven't exercised for some time. Also included below are two highly effective **acupressure** points for relieving and preventing stiff neck and associated headaches.

Neck Twist - Stiff Neck Exercise

How

- 1.** Stand with your feet parallel and about shoulder width apart.



Keep your back straight.

Look straight ahead.

Let your arms hang loosely by your sides.

Or sit on a firm but comfortable chair with your back straight and your hands resting on your thighs.

Look straight ahead.

2. Breathe in *slowly* and *smoothly* through your nose.

As you exhale (through your nose) start *slowly* turning your head to the left as far as you *comfortably* can, or until you are looking over your left shoulder.

Hold the position for a second or two.



3. Breathe in again as you *gently* turn your head back towards the front.

When you are facing the front, start exhaling as you continue to turn your head to the right.

Turn only as far as you *comfortably* can, or until you are looking over your right shoulder.

Hold the position for a second or two.

Continue turning your head from side to side.

Breathe in as you return to the front. Breathe out as you turn to each side.

Try to **stretch** your neck a little further each time.



Do 10 or 12 twists to each side to begin.

Build up to 15 or 20 or simply do the exercise for several minutes each time, once or twice a day.

Benefits

- Stretches & loosens the neck muscles & tendons
- Stimulates the nerves of the cervical (neck) vertebrae
- Relieves neck pain
- j Prevents neck problems

Tips

- 5 Breathes *slowly, smoothly & deeply* throughout the exercise
 - Don't force it *stop* if you feel any pain
 - T Rub some liniment into any painful spots beforehand
-

Acupressure Points For Stiff Neck

For greater effectiveness, press the following acupressure points *before* you do the above stiff neck exercise *or other* neck exercises:

Point 1

Located either side of your spine on the outside edge of your neck muscles, in a hollow at the base of your skull.

Place your hands on your head. Use your thumbs to press the points one at a time. Press in and up in the direction of your eyes.

Use enough pressure so that you feel a *comfortable* pain.

Press the right side 12 times. Each time you press, hold for 3 seconds then release for 1 second.

Count like this: Press 123...release...press 223...release...press 323, etc, up to 12.



Repeat on the left side.

Press this point 2-3 times a day when you have a stiff neck or neck pain.

Benefits

- Relieves neck pain & stiffness
 - Relieves headache at the back & side of the head
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Point 2

Located in the muscle on the tops of your shoulders half way between your spine and the outside tip of the shoulders.

Use your index and middle fingers to locate then press the right shoulder point 12 times.

Apply enough pressure so you feel a comfortable pain.

As with point 1, press for 3 seconds then release for 1 second.

Repeat on the left shoulder.



Press this point 2-3 times a day when you have a stiff neck or neck pain.

Benefits

- Relieves neck & shoulder pain & stiffness