

Stretch and Relax

Source: Manitoba *in motion*

Equipment: list of stretches
microphone (for large groups)

Space: participants require a small amount of space

How to:

- Gently warm up the body by marching on the spot or moving around the tables and chairs.
- When doing the stretches, breathe naturally.

Note: Plan your stretches to include all major body parts. Choose two or three stretches from each of the following sections. Stretching pictures and handouts are available at www.winnipeginmotion.ca



Stretches for the Neck, Shoulder and Chest

Neck side stretch Stand or sit; gently tilt your head to the side, reaching ear to your shoulder. Repeat on the other side.

Chin to chest Sit or stand; gently tuck your chin to your chest.

Nose to armpit Sit or stand; tip your head to one side and drop your shoulder slightly. Turn your head to look at opposite armpit. Repeat on other side.

Reverse shoulder rolls Sit or stand; roll your shoulders gently in a backwards motion.

Fly away (front of shoulder) Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Lift your arms out to the side of the body at shoulder height, palms facing down. Reach behind as far as comfortably possible.

Straight arm across (back of shoulder) Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Bring one arm across the chest and hold it in place with the opposite arm. Repeat on the other side.

Chest stretch Sit or stand with your elbows at shoulder height, fingers near ears. Pull your shoulder blades toward each other. Hold, relax and repeat.

Triceps stretch Sit or stand; lift one arm above your head. Bend your elbow and place your hand between the shoulder blades as far down as comfortably possible. Hold stretch; change arm positions and repeat.



Stretches for the Trunk (back and abdominals)

Side stretch

Sit or stand with feet shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent, supporting most of your weight on the left thigh. Slowly reach your right arm above your head and lean slightly over to the left side. Repeat on opposite side.

Apple pick

Stand, with your knees slightly bent, arms overhead and in front. Reach up and forward with one arm, exhaling as you stretch. Repeat with the other arm. Or, while sitting in a chair, interlace fingers and turn palms upwards above your head as you straighten your arms. Think of elongating your arms. Hold, relax and repeat.

Trunk rotation

Sit in a chair with your left leg bent over right leg, rest your elbow or right forearm on the outside of the upper thigh of your left leg. Slowly apply some controlled, steady pressure toward the right with your elbow or forearm. At the same time, look over your left shoulder. Hold and repeat. Change leg positions and repeat.

Standing modified cat stretch

Stand with your feet slightly apart and toes facing forward. Sit back as if sitting in a chair and place your hands on your thighs. Inhale while looking straight ahead and your buttocks back and down. Exhale and look down as you round your back. Hold; then slowly roll your back up until you are standing. Think of rolling up one vertebra at a time. Repeat.

Back extension

Stand with your hands placed on your lower back. Slowly extend your back, slightly arching. Think of lifting your ribcage and opening your chest. Release and repeat.

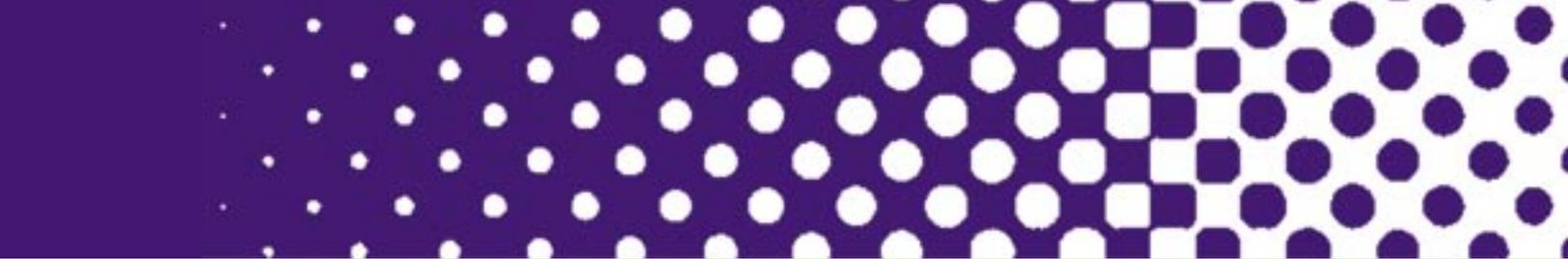
Stretches for the Ankles/Legs/Buttocks

Hip push

Stand with your feet together, holding onto the back of a chair. Bend forward slightly at the waist. Bend one leg and straighten the other, pushing the hip of the straight leg outward. Repeat on the other leg.

Standing thigh stretch

Bend one knee, grasp your ankle behind you and gently pull heel toward your buttocks. Hold and relax. Repeat on the other side. Avoid arching your back. Touch a wall or hold onto a chair for balance.



Lunge

Position yourself in a lunge position, with your front knee over the front ankle and your back leg comfortably behind you. Straighten your spine so your posture is fully erect. Lightly press the back hip forward and hold. Relax and repeat. Change leg positions and repeat. Use a chair for balance and support.

Standing hamstring (back of thigh)

Facing a chair, place one foot up on it, keeping both hips and feet facing forward. Keep your back straight and lean forward from the hips to increase the stretch in the back of the thigh.

Sitting hamstring stretch

Sit in a chair and extend one leg in front of you. Slowly bend forward from the hips and hold. Relax and repeat. Change your leg positions and repeat.



Calf stretch

Use this exercise to relieve tightness and cramping in the lower leg. Stand facing the back of a chair or a wall. Make sure you are about an arm's length away. Step forward with one foot. Slowly slide the back foot away from the wall. Keep the heel of the back foot pressing onto the floor. Hold and then repeat on the other side.



Side lunge

Stand with legs apart, feet pointing straight ahead, hands on hips. Shift your weight over one leg, keeping the other leg straight and foot flat on the floor. Keep upper body tall and hold. Repeat on the other side.

Seated flex and point

Sit in a chair and extend your legs straight out in front with knees very slightly bent. Pull your toes toward your body. Release the stretch by pointing the toes as far from the body as comfortably possible. Remember to sit tall. Repeat as a continuous controlled sequence 10 to 15 times.

Ankle circles

While seated, slowly circle one foot several times in one direction, and then change to the other direction. Repeat on the other foot.

