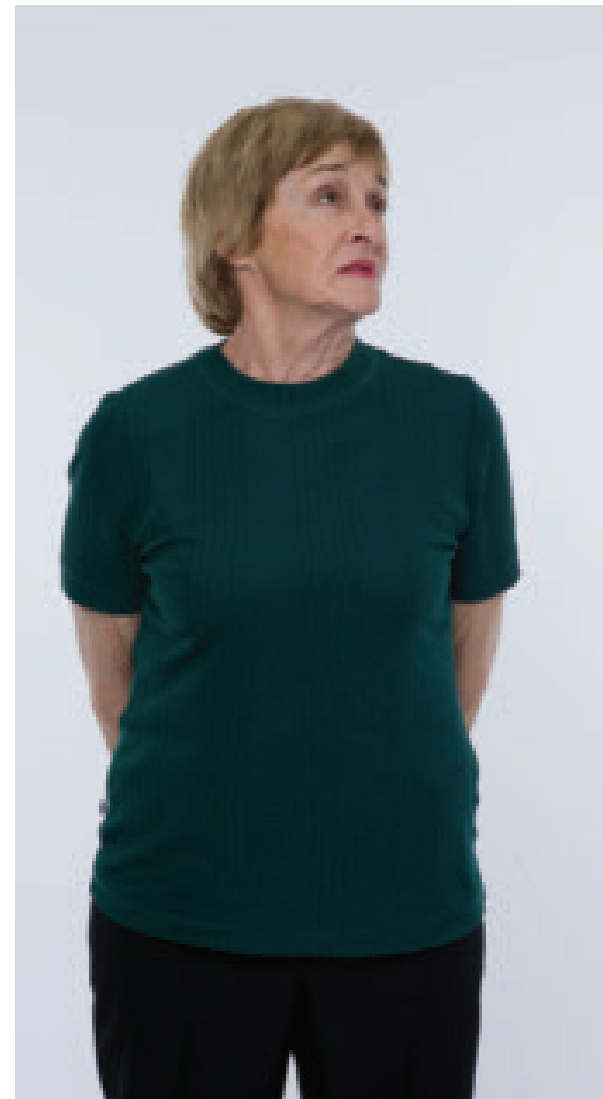


Neck



This easy stretch can help relieve tension in your neck. Try to stretch after strength training and during any activity that makes you feel stiff, such as sitting at a desk.

1. You can do this stretch while standing or sitting in a sturdy chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Slowly turn your head to the right until you feel a slight stretch. Be careful not to tip or tilt your head forward or backward, but hold it in a comfortable position.
4. Hold the position for 10–30 seconds.
5. Turn your head to the left and hold the position for 10–30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least three–five times.



About floor exercises

To get down on the floor:

1. Stand facing the seat of a sturdy chair.
2. Put your hands on the seat and lower yourself down on one knee. Use a mat or towel to cushion your knee.
3. Bring the other knee down.
4. Put your left hand on the floor. Leaning on your hand, slowly bring your left hip to the floor. Put your right hand on the floor next to your left hand to steady yourself, if needed.
5. You should now be sitting with your weight on your left hip.
6. Straighten your legs.
7. Bend your left elbow until your weight is resting on it. Using your right hand as needed for support, straighten your left arm. You should now be lying on your left side.
8. Roll on to your back.



Quick tip

You don't have to use your left side. You can use your right side, if you prefer.



Quick tips



- You don't have to use your left side. You can use your right side if you prefer.
- Use the chair to help you push up. Do not pull on furniture as you may pull it on to yourself.
- If you have trouble getting down on to or up from the floor by yourself, try using the buddy system. Find someone who will be able to help you. Knowing how to use a chair to get down on the floor and get back up again may also be helpful.
- If it is not possible for you to get on to the floor, many of these exercises can be done in bed.

To get up from the floor:



1. Roll on to your left side.
2. Place your right hand on the floor at about the level of your ribs and use it to push your shoulders off the floor. Use your left hand to help lift you up, as needed.
3. You should now be sitting with your weight on your left hip.
4. Roll forward, on to your knees, leaning on your hands for support.
5. Reach up and lean your hands on the seat of a sturdy chair.
6. Lift one of your knees so that one leg is bent, foot flat on the floor.
7. Leaning your hands on the seat of the chair for support, push up with your arms and legs and pivot your buttocks around on to the chair.



This exercise stretches the muscles of your lower back.



Lower back



1. Lie on your back with your legs together, knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Try to keep both arms and shoulders flat on the floor throughout the stretch.
2. Keeping knees bent and together, slowly lower both legs to one side as far as you comfortably can, keeping your head still.
3. Hold position for 10–30 seconds.
4. Bring legs back up slowly and repeat toward other side.
5. Continue alternating sides for at least three–five times on each side.

As you progress:

- Level 2:** Gently move your head to the opposite side as your legs to increase the stretch.
- Level 3:** Use your hand to gently push your knees closer to the ground.

Back of leg



This exercise stretches the muscles in the back of your legs.

Floor

1. Lie on your back with left knee bent and left foot flat on the floor.
2. Raise right leg, keeping knee slightly bent.
3. Reach up and grasp right leg with both hands. Keep head and shoulders flat on the floor. If you can't reach your leg, loop a resistance band, belt or towel over your foot and hold both ends.
4. Gently pull right leg toward your body until you feel a stretch in the back of your leg.
5. Hold position for 10–30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least three–five times.
7. Repeat at least three–five times with left leg.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try to work up to reaching your foot.



Chair/bench:

1. Sit sideways on a bench seat or other hard surface, such as two chairs placed together.
2. Keeping your back straight, stretch one leg out on the bench, toes pointing up.
3. Keep your other foot flat on the floor.
4. If you feel a stretch at this point, hold position for 10–30 seconds.
5. If you don't feel a stretch, lean forward from hips (not waist) until you feel stretching in the leg on the bench.
6. Hold position for 10–30 seconds.
7. Repeat at least three–five times.
8. Repeat at least three–five times with your other leg.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try to work up to reaching your foot.



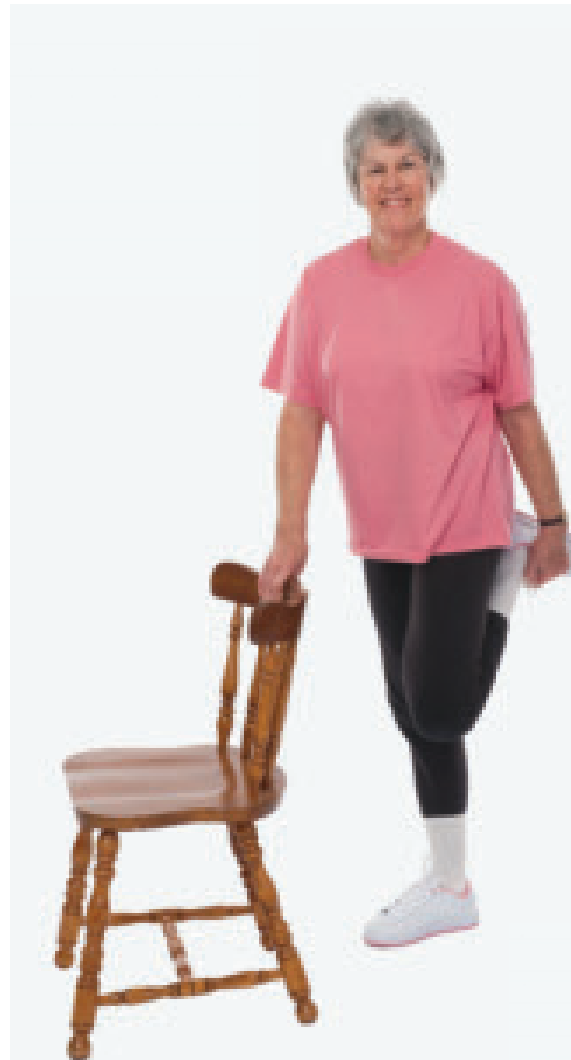
This exercise stretches your thigh muscles.

Thigh



Floor

1. Lie on your side with legs straight and knees together.
2. Rest your head on your arm.
3. Bend your top knee and reach back and grab the top of your foot. If you can't reach your foot, loop a resistance band, belt or towel over your foot and hold both ends.
4. Gently pull your leg until you feel a stretch in your thigh.
5. Hold position for 10–30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least three–five times.
7. Repeat at least three–five times with your other leg.



Standing:

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair with your feet shoulder-width apart and your legs straight, but not locked.
2. Hold on to the chair for balance with your right hand.
3. Bend your left leg back and grab your foot in your left hand. Keep your knees together and your back straight.
4. Gently pull your leg until you feel a stretch in your thigh.
5. Hold position for 10–30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least three–five times.
7. Repeat at least three–five times with your right leg, holding it with your right hand.

As you progress:



Level 2: Try improving your balance by gradually reducing your hand support.

Inner thigh



This exercise will stretch your groin and inner-thigh muscles.

1. Lie on your back with your legs together, knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Try to keep both shoulders on the floor throughout the stretch.
2. Slowly lower one knee as far as you comfortably can. Try not to move the other leg as you keep your feet close together and your hips and back flat on the floor.
3. Hold position for 10–30 seconds.
4. Bring knee back up slowly.
5. Repeat at least three–five times.
6. Repeat at least three–five times with your other leg.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try this exercise in a sitting position, with the soles of your feet touching and in as close to your body as possible. Gently lower both knees outwards toward the floor as far as you comfortable can.

Level 3: Gently push down on your knees with your hands to increase the stretch.



Because many people have tight calf muscles, it's important to stretch them.

Calf



1. Stand facing a wall slightly further than arm's length from the wall, feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Put your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
3. Step forward with right leg and bend right knee. Keeping both feet flat on the floor, bend left knee slightly until you feel a stretch in your left calf muscle. It shouldn't feel uncomfortable. If you don't feel a stretch, bend your right knee until you do.
4. Hold position for 10–30 seconds, and then return to starting position.
5. Repeat with left leg.
6. Continue alternating legs for at least three–five times on each leg.

Buddy stretch



This is a good overall stretch that's fun to do with a partner. It stretches your shoulders, arms, back and legs. (See Working with a resistance band on page 34.)

1. Sit on the floor facing your buddy and place your feet against your partner's feet.
2. Both of you should grab one end of a resistance band or towel. Depending on each person's flexibility, you may need to loop two bands or towels together.
3. Slowly pull the band or towel so that your buddy bends forward and you lean backward.
4. Hold position for 10–30 seconds.
5. Slowly return to starting position.
6. Now it's your buddy's turn to pull the band or towel so that you bend forward and your buddy leans backward. Hold for 10–30 seconds, and then return to starting position.
7. Repeat at least three–five times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try holding the band so that your hands are closer to your buddy's, or try using a heavier strength band.

Level 3: Build up to reaching out and holding hands with your buddy during the stretch.

