



Stretching for Balance

By Allison Ishman, LMT, Certified Personal Trainer

Have you ever noticed that when you go to stretch, you don't really stretch everything? That's pretty common. Most people only stretch the muscles that occur to them at the time.

Other people stretch more intentionally, but still have a stretching routine that just isn't a balanced one. When you use the chart below, you can get a feel for what muscles are tighter and which are less tight. Spend more time with the tighter muscles than you do with the looser muscles, and that should help to make you more balanced!

Why be balanced? It prevents injuries such as rotator cuff tears and hamstring pulls, reduces neck and shoulder tension, increases your energy levels, and can even clear your head better.

They are designed to help stretch and relax the most common tension areas in most people's bodies. This includes people that work at a computer, stand for any period of time, drive or ride in airplanes often, are a runner, cyclist or tri-athlete, and those that do similar activities.

I recommend that you do the stretches back to back. This means stretch inner thigh then outer thigh twice - back to back. Stretch quadriceps then hamstrings twice for each muscle group. It looks like I am going to make a video of these stretches. If you are interested in a copy of the video, please [let me know](#).

Inner and Outer Thigh & Butt (a.k.a. IT Band)

(Inner Thigh, Outer Thigh & Butt, Inner Thigh, Outer Thigh & Butt)

Inner Thigh Stretches - Butterfly Stretch or Side Lunges or Lean body forward while sitting on the floor with your legs in a V, or with legs up in air, support legs as letting them fall to sides

Outer Thigh & Butt Stretches - Bring your knee to your chest and gently pull your knee across your body/chest so that your left knee is toward your right shoulder - your right knee will go toward your left shoulder when you switch sides. Alternate by pulling your ankle into your chest and moving through the range of motion.

Quads and Hamstrings

(Quads, Hamstrings, Quads, Hamstrings)

Quad Stretches - Stand and grab your ankle so that your knee is bent, and hold the ankle near your butt. Tuck your butt under to maximize the stretch.

Hamstring Stretches - With your foot forward of your body on floor, set your heel down on the ground. Lean your body slightly forward and stick out your butt while keeping a straight knee. *May also be done with leg on bench or chair

Ishman BodyCare Center & Institute

608 S. Washington Street, Naperville, Illinois 60540
(630) 378-3768 Business Office (630) 355-5125 Appointments (630) 355-5186 Fax
www.ibodycare.com ishman1@ibodycare.com



Psoas (groin) and Calf

(Psoas (groin), Calf, Psoas (groin), Calf)

Psoas (groin) stretches - Lunge forward while down on one knee – modify to side to tolerance.

Calf Stretches - Straight knee and bent knee stretches BOTH - put your toes up on a doorframe or post and bring your hips over top to stretch your calf. Also may be done with your heels hanging off a stair while your weight is settled into your ankle - balance yourself on the ball of your feet at the edge of a stair. Also do straight and bent knee.

Armpit and Neck

(Armpit, Neck, Armpit, Neck)

Armpit Stretches - Put your hand on a doorframe, post, or wall and lean your upper body directly to the side, into your armpit area. If your left hand is on the wall, your right hip should be directed outward - away from your left pit - as you do this. Another stretch is to grab one wrist with the other hand while standing, drop both on top of your head, and reach for the ceiling with one elbow. Either way, you should feel the stretch in your ribs and into the muscles in your armpit (called your Teres, lat., and rotator cuff, as well as serratus muscle and a few others...)

Neck Stretches - Without picking up your shoulders, drop your head - ear to shoulder - to the side. It may help to look in a mirror the first few times to be sure you're not scrunching up funny or are too forward or too far backward. From that position, roll about 45 degrees forward to stretch the rotators of your neck, then backward to stretch the front rotators of your neck.

Forearms - each side

(Back, Front, Back, Front)

Forearm Flexor Stretches - With your forearm resting on something such as a desk or your knee (when sitting), gently pull your fingers back toward your body, so your palm is facing away from your body. This is stretching the palm and the muscles on the "white" side of your arm - the side that doesn't tan as easily. You have your arm resting on something so you don't flex your shoulders as you stretch - stay relaxed in your whole arm, and breathe.

Forearm Extensor Stretches - Set your forearm on a table or your knee (when sitting) and let it be palm up - toward the ceiling. Make a loose fist with one hand, and wrap the other hand around it so that the fist arm doesn't have to work at all. Gently bend your wrist and pull with the wrapped-around hand - stretching through the back section of your forearm (the side that tans first). You have your arm resting on something so you don't flex your shoulders as you stretch - stay relaxed in your whole arm, and breathe.

Ishman BodyCare Center & Institute

608 S. Washington Street, Naperville, Illinois 60540
(630) 378-3768 Business Office (630) 355-5125 Appointments (630) 355-5186 Fax
www.ibodycare.com ishman1@ibodycare.com



Low Back, Upper Back and Chest

(Back, Front, Back, Front)

Low Back Stretches - Side Stretch: Move into a light squat with feet slightly wider than your shoulders. Drop your right forearm onto your right thigh. Reach towards the ceiling with your left hand and arm. Slowly bring your left elbow over top of your left ear and reach overhead. Then gently drop your left shoulder toward the floor so that you are looking at the floor.

Chest Stretch - Place your hand and elbow on a beam or doorway with your elbow at about shoulder height and your hand straight above that. Turn away from that hand and arm with your body. You should feel this stretch in your chest. Hold for a few seconds at an intensity level where you feel the stretch but can relax. Adjust your arm height on the beam as needed. Repeat with the other side.

Tricep and Bicep

(Back, Front, Back, Front)

Tricep Stretch - Put one hand overhead, reaching toward the ceiling. Bend that arm at the elbow, and bring your hand behind your neck. Use the other hand to push down on the elbow of the first arm, pressing your elbow toward the floor.

Bicep Stretch - Put one hand on a doorframe, slightly above your shoulder height. Make sure that the elbow of that arm is bent about 90 degrees. Also, be sure that your knuckles are facing straight backward. Gently turn away from your arm. This is an upper bicep stretch.

Have questions? Want to suggest a self-care technique not already listed here?
Want to share an experience? I'd love to hear it. Email me at ishman1@ibodycare.com.

© Allison Ishman 12-17-1998 – All Rights Reserved. Do not duplicate without permission except for personal use.

Ishman BodyCare Center & Institute

608 S. Washington Street, Naperville, Illinois 60540
(630) 378-3768 Business Office (630) 355-5125 Appointments (630) 355-5186 Fax
www.ibodycare.com ishman1@ibodycare.com