

8 STRETCHES YOU SHOULD DO EVERY MORNING*

There's nothing quite like a good stretch. It feels great, and can make a world of difference in a healthy and balanced lifestyle. A few minutes in your morning routine devoted to stretching can be the perfect way to start your day.

Many people with desk jobs develop tension or pain, and simply starting an exercise routine can have them feeling more limber. Pain and stiffness in the morning is common, because of accumulated fluids during sleep. This routine can help to move the blood and reduce pain.

Benefits of Stretching

Be More Flexible

One benefit of stretching is that it increases your flexibility. It helps to maintain mobility in the body and can increase the range of motion. A study found that both dynamic and static stretching can effectively benefit the body.

Stand Straighter

Another fantastic thing about stretching is that it improves your posture. Look and feel more confident after regularly doing a stretching routine. Increase alignment and less pain were seen in participants, which can improve posture.

Less Back Pain

The third benefit of stretching is that it can actually heal and prevent back pain. Half of working Americans report feeling some kind of back pain, and this is something that everyone can use. Existing back injuries can be healed with stretching.

Less Stress

Stretching also helps to ease stress and calm the mind. By focusing on breathing and on reducing tension in the muscles, the entire body feels more relaxed. Physically, it increases blood flow. Mentally, it encourages mindfulness.

The Routine

Cat & Cow

The cat and cow flow is excellent for the torso and to lengthen the back, neck, and spine. It helps develop flexibility and strengthens the spine while opening and creating space in the neck.

Begin with your hands and knees on the floors with palms situated directly under the shoulders and the knees right under the hips.

Take a breath in and pull your abdominal muscles in while arching your back up like a cat stretching. While doing this, let your head and tailbone move down toward the floor.

Go back to the starting position, and then bend the upper part of the spine upwards while supporting it by engaging the abdominal muscles. Don't let your neck sink into your shoulders or the shoulders crunch up into your neck. Try to keep your neck as a long extension of the rest of the spine, and don't let the head fall back.

Again, return to the starting position and repeat the flow five times.

Click [here](#) for video link.

Standing Hamstring Stretch

This is a great stretch for the backs of the legs, and it can also help with lower back pain.

Put your left heel on a surface that's slightly lower than your hip, like a bench, bed or chair and flex your foot.

Deepen the stretch by bending forward toward the flexed foot. Hold for 30 seconds, then stretching the other leg.

Click [here](#) for video link.



Standing Forward Bend

Stand with feet spread hip distance apart with the knees slightly bent, and hinge forward at your hips.

Let your upper body hang over your legs and grasp your elbows. An easier variation for people with lower back issues is to place your hands on the ground to support you.

Hold the pose for 3 to 4 deep breaths. You can shake your head back and forth "no" or rock in the pose from side to side.

Slowing come up by pulling in your abdominals and round your vertebrae up one at a time. Repeat it two times.

Click [here](#) for video link.

Door Stretch

This posture offers the frame of a door for support to straighten the spine, open up the chest and strengthen the shoulders and arms. It can relax the muscles in the torso as well.

To perform the posture, place the arms on the door jam and step your foot through the threshold.

The upper arms should be parallel to the floor and the forearms aligned up and along the doorway.

Bend the front knee until you can feel the stretch in the shoulders or chest. Hold it for 30 seconds, and repeat on the other leg.

Click [here](#) for video link.

Standing Side Stretch

This stretch is good for the shoulders, core and upper back. It can also extend the range of motion for the core, shoulders, and back.

Clasp your hands and extend the pointer fingers. Hold them over your head. As you reach forward inhale and exhale as you bend your body to the right.

Breathe in slowly 5 times, and return to center. Do the same thing on the left side. Repeat 3 to 4 times, taking your time.

Click [here](#) for video link.

Elevated Pigeon Stretch

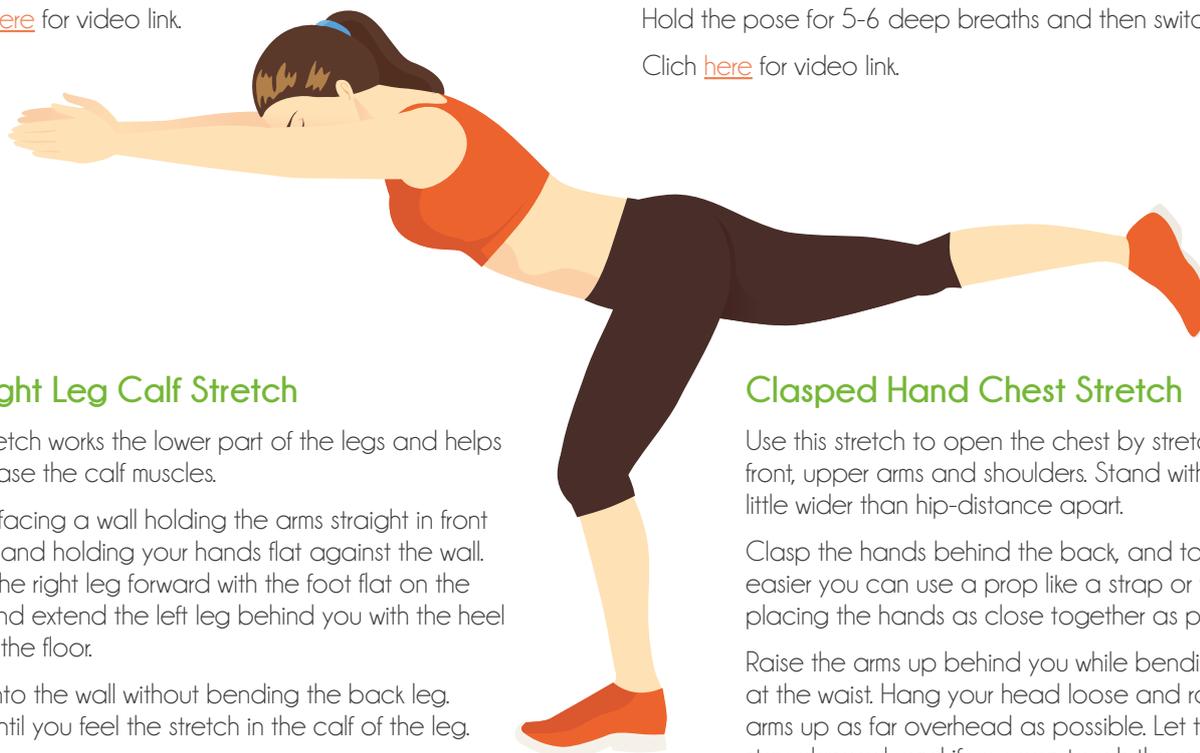
This stretch is ideal for opening the hips and it can help with back issues like lower back pain.

Take your left leg with the knee bent on the bed. Then square your hips while making sure the front knee is placed outside of the front shoulder.

With your spine straight and tailbone untucked, bend forward at the hips and place your hands on the bed for more support.

Hold the pose for 5-6 deep breaths and then switch sides.

Click [here](#) for video link.



Straight Leg Calf Stretch

This stretch works the lower part of the legs and helps to release the calf muscles.

Stand facing a wall holding the arms straight in front of you and holding your hands flat against the wall. Keep the right leg forward with the foot flat on the floor and extend the left leg behind you with the heel flat on the floor.

Lean into the wall without bending the back leg. Hold until you feel the stretch in the calf of the leg.

Hold it for 30 seconds and then switch to the other side. Repeat twice on each leg for three sets.

Click [here](#) for video link.

Clasped Hand Chest Stretch

Use this stretch to open the chest by stretching the front, upper arms and shoulders. Stand with the feet a little wider than hip-distance apart.

Clasp the hands behind the back, and to make this easier you can use a prop like a strap or towel while placing the hands as close together as possible.

Raise the arms up behind you while bending forward at the waist. Hang your head loose and raise the arms up as far overhead as possible. Let the hands stay clasped, and if you can touch the palms together. Hold this for 30 seconds or more, and repeat three more times.

Click [here](#) for video link.

*Disclaimer: This information is not considered as medical advice. Specific ailments may require other specific stretches or may be contraindicated in some activities. Please consult your healthcare practitioner before starting any physical activity.

