

Dr. Phil Good's Personal Workout Program

Flexibility Exercises

Free Hang

Two Arm Hang From Pull-up Bar



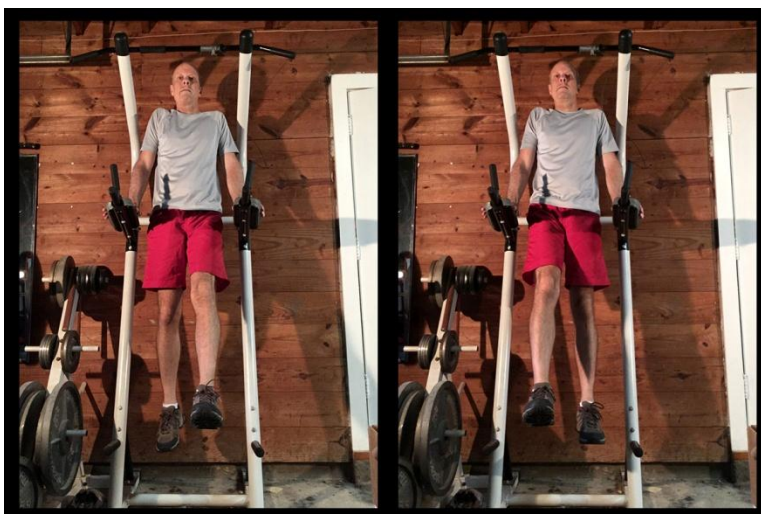
This can be done with a wide or narrow grip. I usually allow my feet to rest on the ground as holding them up involves contracting some of the muscles around the spine, making for a less-effective stretch. I also usually twist gently back and forth as shown in the picture to stretch things at different angles. I usually do this for about 30 seconds a couple of times with my hands at different widths.

Straight Arm Hang From Dip Station Swinging Legs Together



Push yourself up with your arms extended and relax your lower body as much as possible. Swing your legs gently back and forth to loosen the lower back and hips.

Straight Arm Hang From Dip Station “Walking” Motion



Same as above, but with swinging legs individually in a walking motion.

Bent Arm Hang From Dip Station “Walking” Motion



Another option for arm position when doing a hang from the dip station.

Straight Arm Hang From Chairs



If you don't have a dip station, you can do something similar with a couple of chairs – just be sure they are sturdy and positioned someplace they won't slide out from under you!

Back Extension



This is a great exercise for most low back and upper back problems, including disc protrusions. In most cases, the position on the left is adequate to get good results and is a good starting point if you've never done this type of stretch before. The position on the right, known as "the cobra" in yoga, will stretch things more, but sometimes can irritate spinal arthritis. If you have been diagnosed with severe spinal degeneration, stenosis, or spondylolisthesis, both positions should be avoided unless directed by a health care professional familiar with your case. Back extension should also be avoided if it causes any pain or numbness in either leg (or causes existing pain/numbness to extend further down the leg), unless directed by a health care professional.

Knee to Chest Stretch

Single Knee to Opposite Shoulder



The single leg knee to chest stretch can be done straight or as shown with the knee being pulled towards the opposite shoulder. I typically do the straight knee to chest with both legs (which will be shown next) to save a little time and do this to get a little different angle on things for the individual legs and to better stretch the piriformis muscle (which, when tight, can cause sciatica-like symptoms).

Two Leg Knee to Chest



Figure 4 Stretch



Sometimes used as a piriformis stretch, the Figure 4 actually targets the gluteus minimus muscle better than the piriformis. Tightness in the gluteus minimus may cause sciatica-like pain, but it's usually in the side of the leg, rather than the back of the leg as with true sciatica and pain from the piriformis muscle. Start with lying on your back with your legs bent. Cross one leg over the other and reach behind the straight leg with your hands and pull it towards your chest. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds and then switch legs. Repeat as needed.

Flat Bicycle



This is a mobilization for the hips, sacroiliac joints (where the spine joins the pelvis), and the low back, as well as a toning exercise for the abs and leg muscles. Lie on your back, raise your bent legs from the floor, and alternate straightening and bending your legs as shown, simulating the motion of riding a bicycle. I usually do about 30 repetitions as part of my before bed stretching routine.

Enhanced Pelvic Tilt



The pelvic tilt is done lying on the back as shown and alternating between extension and flexion of the lower spine as seen in the close-ups in the lower set of pictures. The usual way the pelvic tilt is done is by actively contracting the abdominal muscles and flexing the lumbar spine (pressing the spine downward until it is flat on the surface) and then simply relaxing to allow the spine to curve upwards again. The enhanced pelvic tilt goes a step further and you actively contract the back and buttock muscles to accentuate the extension of the spine (increasing the upward curve). This exercise enhances mobility in the lower back and provides some basic toning for the abs. I typically do 30 repetitions as part of my evening stretching regimen.

Trunk Rotation



Start as shown in the image on the left and slowly lower your legs to one side, keeping your upper body flat on the floor or mat. Pause for 10 to 15 seconds, slowly return to the starting position, and then lower your legs to the other side. I usually do 10 to 15 to each side every night.

Lying Shoulder/Chest Stretch



I suggest doing two positions as shown – one with the arms straight up over your head and one with them straight out to your sides. Simply get into the position, relax, and take several deep breaths. I do thirty seconds to a minute in each position as part of my nightly regimen.

Head Retraction



The exercise is done with a pillow or pad as shown in the top pictures. The bottom pictures are to better illustrate the motion. Begin by standing with your back flat against the wall and your head jutting forward slightly (you want a pillow or pad that holds your head forward a bit from the wall when you are standing relaxed). With slow, steady pressure, press your head straight back into the pillow/pad. The motion is a straight back “slide” of the head as opposed to tipping your head backwards.

Upright Chest Stretch



Stand next to a wall or solid object and hold on to it with your arm straight out to your side at approximately shoulder level as shown in the picture on the left. Slowly turn your body so that your arm is pulled straight back behind you as shown in the picture on the right. Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds, then slowly turn your body back to the starting position. Switch arms and repeat. If you have shoulder problems, you may not be able to get all the way to the second position – simply go as far as you can without feeling significant pain. I usually do a couple of repetitions with each arm every night, but if you have restricted mobility on this stretch, it usually helps to do it frequently throughout the day to make better gains in muscle flexibility and more frequent stretching may help alleviate a variety of shoulder pains.

Back “Scratch” Stretch

Upper Back Scratch



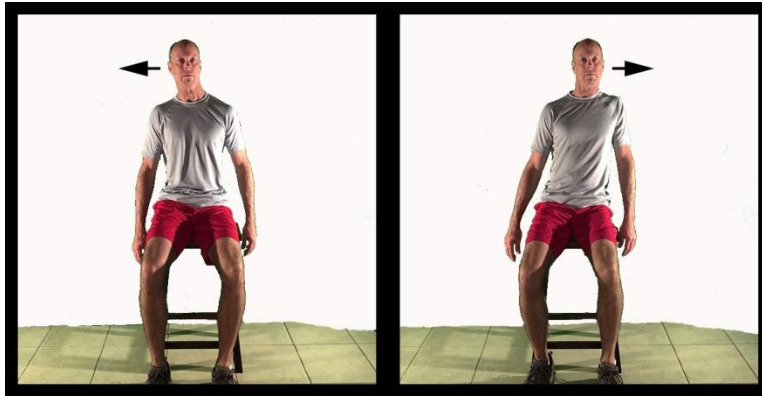
Raise your arm up and reach your hand back towards your shoulder blade, using the other hand to gently increase the stretch. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. I usually do each arm once or twice every night.

Upper and Lower Back Scratch With Towel



This is another way to stretch the shoulder and is good when your mobility is too restricted to perform the upper back scratch exercise above. Using a towel, rope, or other object, alternate pulling the upper arm back and down with the lower arm and then pulling the lower arm upward with the upper arm. Hold each stretch 15 to 30 seconds. I usually do the stretch shown previously without the towel, but sometimes do this for some variety.

Sideways Neck Translation



This is a good stretch for tightness in the neck and shoulders, as well as a means of helping correct sideways postural distortions. Note that the movement is a “slide” of the head to the side (keeping the eyes relatively level), rather than a “tilt”. I tend towards a sideways postural shift to the right, so I mostly do this exercise to the left as part of my stretching regimen. If you do not have a tendency either direction, going equally to both sides is a good mobilization for the neck.

Neck and Shoulder Side Stretch



This is a good stretch for loosening tight muscles in the neck, shoulder, and upper back. Use slow, gentle, steady pressure with your hand to increase the sideways tilt of the head (avoid “bouncing” or “jerking” the head, as this will usually cause the muscles to tighten more!). Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds and alternate sides. I usually do this 2 or 3 times to each side every night.