STRETCHING *for* WORKING AMERICA

(A Ten Minute Sequence)

When you stretch, keep the following points in mind:

- **Stretch to a point where you feel a mild tension and relax as you hold the stretch.**
- **Do not bounce.**
- **If you are stretching correctly, the feeling of stretch should slightly subside as you hold the stretch.**
- **Any stretch feeling that grows in intensity or becomes painful as you hold the stretch is an overstretch.**
- **The long-sustained, mild stretch reduces unwanted muscle tension and tightness.**
- **Stretches should be held for 10-30 seconds, depending on which stretch you are doing.**
- **Breathe slowly, rhythmically and under control.**
- **Relax your mind and body as much as possible.**
- **Always stretch within your comfortable limits, never to the point of pain.**
- **Do not compare yourself to others. We are all different. Comparisons only lead to overstretching.**
- **The feeling of stretch tells you whether you are stretching correctly or not.**

Note: If you have had any recent surgery, muscle, or joint problem, please consult your personal health care professional before starting a stretching or exercise program.

STRETCHING FOR WORKING AMERICA (10 minute sequence) has been excerpted from the book, STRETCHING FOR WORKING AMERICA, ©1988, Robert A. and Jean E. Anderson, Sally Carlson.

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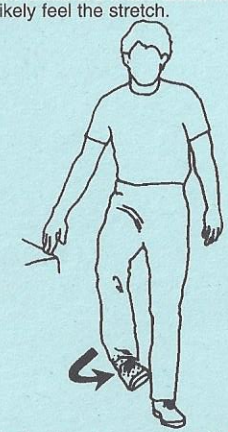
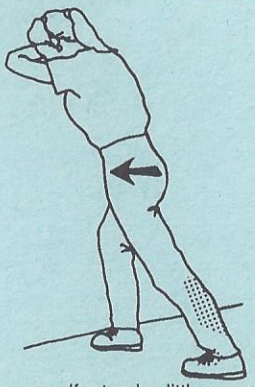
* The dotted areas are those areas of the body where you will most likely feel the stretch.



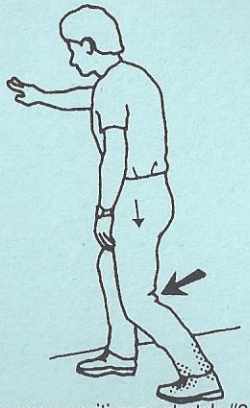
1

If possible, hold on to something for balance. Lift your right foot up off the floor and rotate foot and ankle 7-8 times clockwise, then 7-8 times counter-clockwise. Repeat for left foot and ankle.



2

To stretch your calf, stand a little ways from a solid support and lean on it with your forearms, your head resting on your hands. Place your right foot on the ground in front of you, leg bent, keeping left leg straight, behind you. Slowly move your hips forward until you feel a stretch in the calf of left leg. Be sure to keep your left heel on the ground and **your toes pointed straight ahead**. Hold an easy stretch for 15-20 seconds. Do not bounce. Repeat for right leg.



3

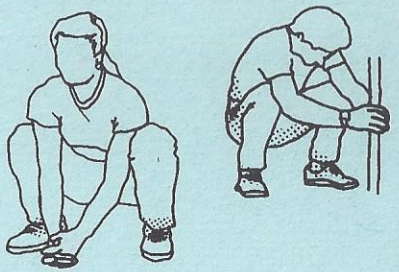
Start from the same position as stretch #2. Push away from the solid support and slightly bend the left leg (which is behind you), keeping the foot flat. Most of your weight should be on your left leg. This gives you a lower stretch in the back of the leg (the soleus and Achilles tendon areas). Hold for 10-12 seconds, each leg. **This area needs only a slight feeling of stretch.**

4

Gently pull your *left* foot (from inside of foot) toward buttocks with your *right* hand until you feel a mild stretch. If necessary place your other hand on a support for balance. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Stretch other leg. Breathe. ***This stretch can also be done using same hand to same foot, with hand holding on top of foot, if preferred.***

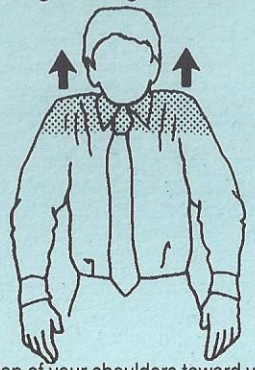
5

Start with your feet pointed straight ahead and a little more than shoulder width apart. Bend right knee slightly and move left hip downward toward right knee. This gives you a stretch in left inner thigh (left groin). Hold for 10-15 seconds and repeat for right groin.



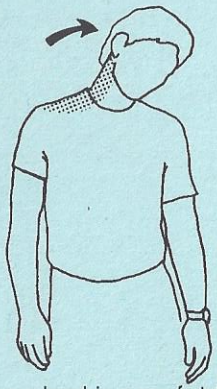
6

With your feet shoulder width apart, toes pointed out (approx. 10°) and heels on the ground, bend your knees and squat. *If you have trouble staying in this position hold on to something for support.* This is a great stretch for your ankles, Achilles tendon area, groin, lower back and hips. Hold stretch for 10-15 seconds. **If knee pain is present, discontinue this stretch.**



7

Raise the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel slight tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold this feeling of tension for 3-5 seconds, then relax your shoulders downward into their normal position. Do this 3 times. Shoulder shrugs are good to use at the first signs of tightness or tension in the shoulder or neck area.



8

Start with your head in a comfortable, aligned position. Slowly tilt your head to the left side to stretch the muscles on the right side of your neck. Hold stretch for 10 seconds. Feel a good, even stretch. **Do not overstretch.** Repeat 2-3 times to each side.

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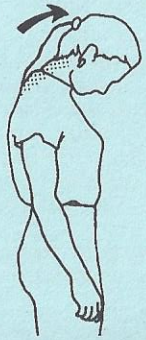
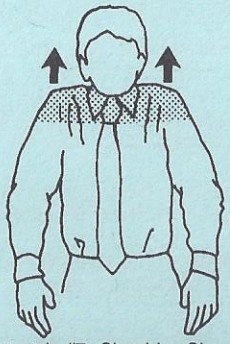


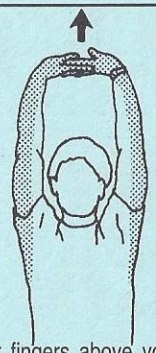
9

Gently tilt your head forward to stretch the back of your neck. Hold for 10 seconds. Hold only tensions that feel good. Do not stretch to the point of pain. Repeat stretch 2 times.



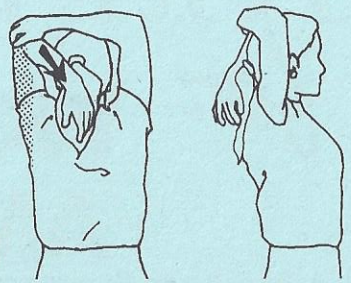
10

Repeat stretch #7, Shoulder Shrug: Raise the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel slight tension for 3-5 seconds, then relax your shoulders downward into their normal position. Do this 3 times.



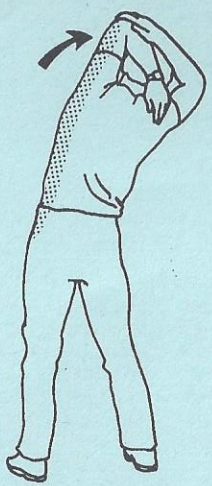
11

Interlace your fingers above your head. With your palms facing upward, push your arms slightly back and up. Feel the stretch in arms, shoulders, and upper back. Hold stretch for 15 seconds. Do not hold your breath. As always, keep knees slightly bent for better balance and to protect your back.



12

Hold left elbow with right hand behind head, then gently pull elbow downward until an easy tension-stretch is felt in left shoulder or back of upper left arm (triceps). Hold easy stretch for 15 seconds. Do not overstretch. Repeat, holding right elbow with left hand.



13

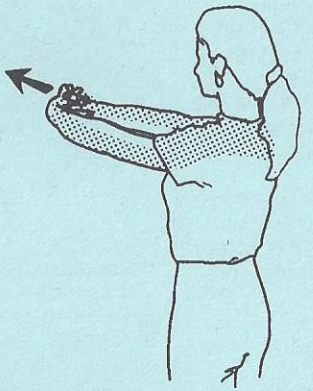
As in stretch #12, hold left elbow with right hand behind your head. **Keeping knees slightly bent**, gently pull left elbow downward as you bend to the right at your hips. Hold an easy stretch for 15 seconds, keeping your knees slightly bent. Repeat stretch holding right elbow with left hand as you bend to the left.

14

Start with your hands on your hips, feet pointed straight ahead, knees slightly bent. Rotate hips to the right as you look over your right shoulder. Hold an easy stretch for 10 seconds. Stretch each side twice. Be relaxed and breathe easily. This is a good stretch for lower back and hips.

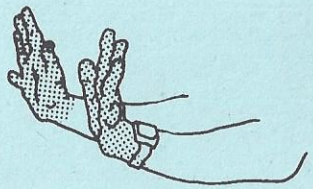
15

Standing with knees slightly bent, place palms on lower back just above hips, fingers pointing downward. Gently push your palms forward to create an extension in the lower back. Hold comfortable pressure for 10-12 seconds. Repeat twice. Use this stretch after sitting for an extended period of time.



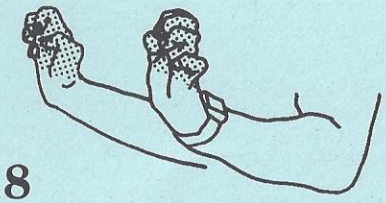
16

Interlace fingers in front of you with palms facing outward and arms straightened. Pressing palms forward, feel the stretch in your arms and the upper part of your back and shoulder blades. Hold stretch for 10-15 seconds. Do stretch 2 times.



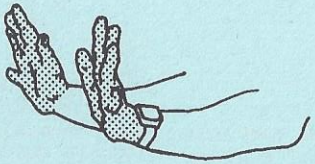
17

Separate and straighten your fingers until stretch-tension is felt. Hold for 10 seconds. Relax.



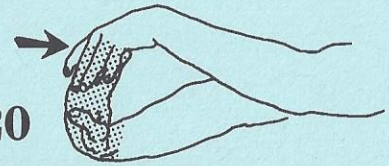
18

Bend your finger at the knuckles and squeeze for 10 seconds. Relax.



19

Repeat stretch #17: Separate and straighten your fingers until stretch-tension is felt. Hold for 10 seconds. Relax.



20

Using your left hand, apply pressure to your right fingers, gently pulling them backward to feel an easy stretch. Hold for 10 seconds. Relax. Repeat stretch #17 and #18 once more. Repeat for other hand.