



SPECIAL EDITION • MOVEMENT & WELLBEING

Stretch with awareness

Techniques, routines and useful insights to build mobility gently - from morning to evening.



Mobility is freedom of movement

Stretching is a tool - not a competition to reach your toes.

Flexibility, mobility and control

Flexibility describes how much range your tissues allow. Mobility combines range with control, strength and coordination. A balanced routine also includes walking, strengthening and changing positions.



STATIC

A comfortable held position, usually for 15-30 seconds. Useful during breaks, after activity or in a dedicated session.



DYNAMIC

Slow, controlled movements through a range. Generally better suited to preparing for activity.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Regular practice may improve range and reduce feelings of stiffness. It does not guarantee injury prevention or replace strength and balance work.

PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

IT IS IMPORTANT TO SEEK GUIDANCE FROM A QUALIFIED EXERCISE PROFESSIONAL, YOGA TEACHER OR PILATES INSTRUCTOR TO ADAPT MOVEMENTS TO YOUR CONDITION AND GOALS.

Neck and shoulders

A short break for anyone who spends long periods sitting, reading or using a phone.



Side neck stretch

- 1 Sit tall and allow your shoulders to drop.
- 2 Tilt one ear towards your shoulder without turning your head.
- 3 Hold for 15-20 seconds, breathe and change sides. Do not pull with your hand.



Cross-body shoulder stretch

- 1 Bring one arm across your chest.
- 2 Support it with the opposite forearm above the elbow and draw it in gently.
- 3 Hold for 15-20 seconds and change sides. Avoid lifting your shoulder.

DID YOU KNOW?

The neck often reacts to sustained positions. Changing tasks and standing regularly may be as important as stretching.

Arms, chest and torso

Broad, controlled movements coordinated with breathing and without momentum.



Triceps

- 1 Raise your arm and bend your elbow.
- 2 Place the other hand gently without pushing your head.
- 3 Breathe for 15-20 seconds; change sides.



Chest opener

- 1 Clasp your hands behind you or hold a towel.
- 2 Gently bring your chest forwards.
- 3 Hold for 15-20 seconds without compressing your lower back.



Side bend

- 1 Raise one arm.
- 2 Lean your torso to the opposite side without rotating.
- 3 Breathe for 15-20 seconds; change sides.

LET BREATHING GUIDE YOU

Inhale to create space. Exhale and allow tension to ease without trying to gain more range with every breath.

Spine and hips

Gentle mobility through flexion, extension and rotation without rushing.



Cat-cow • 6 cycles

- 1 Begin on all fours, hands under shoulders and knees under hips.
- 2 Inhale as you open your chest; exhale as you round your spine.
- 3 Move slowly without taking your neck to its limit.



Child's pose • 20-40 sec

- 1 Bring your hips towards your heels.
- 2 Extend your arms forwards or rest them alongside your body.
- 3 Use a cushion if your knees or hips feel uncomfortable.



Hip flexor

- 1 Kneel on one leg and bring the other foot forwards.
- 2 Keep your torso upright and shift your pelvis forwards slightly.
- 3 Feel the front of the hip on the kneeling side. Hold for 20 seconds and change sides.

Thighs, calves and ankles

To support walking, climbing stairs and carrying your body more comfortably.



Quadriceps

- 1 Use a chair for support.
- 2 Hold your ankle and keep your knees close together.
- 3 15-20 sec each side.



Hamstrings

- 1 Extend one leg and bend the other.
- 2 Hinge from your hips, keeping your spine long.
- 3 20 sec each side.



Calf

- 1 Place your hands on a wall with one leg behind you.
- 2 Keep the heel down and toes pointing forwards.
- 3 20-30 sec each side.

NO BOUNCING

Do not bounce at the end of your range. Move in slowly, hold with normal breathing and come out with control.

Wake up in 7 minutes

A light, dynamic sequence to wake up the body.



1 min **Breathing + overhead reach**

Inhale as you raise your arms; exhale as you lower them.



1 min **Neck and shoulders**

Gentle side tilts with relaxed shoulders.



1 min **Cat-cow**

Complete 6 slow cycles, following your breath.



1 min **Side bend**

Alternate sides without holding your breath.



1 min **Hips**

Kneeling lunge, 20 seconds each side.



1 min **Legs**

Alternate hamstring and calf stretches.



1 min **Marching on the spot**

Finish with light steps and relaxed arms.

BEFORE EXERCISE

Choose dynamic movements related to the activity. Long static stretches are not essential during a warm-up.

A 5-minute work break

The best position is your next one: vary, stand and move regularly.

- 1 Walk for 1 minute or march on the spot.
- 2 Complete 5 thoracic rotations to each side while seated on a stable chair.
- 3 Open your chest for 20 seconds without arching your lower back.
- 4 Hold a cross-body shoulder stretch for 15 seconds each side.
- 5 Complete 10 heel raises and 10 ankle movements.



ERGONOMICS WITHOUT RIGIDITY

Appropriate support helps, but no posture needs to be maintained all day. Frequent small changes reduce time spent in sustained positions.

USING A CHAIR

Use a stable chair without wheels, keep your feet supported and allow space around you. Move slowly.

Wind down at the end of the day

A comfortable sequence can signal a transition towards rest without promising immediate sleep.



- 1 Dim the lights and put your phone aside if possible.
- 2 Hold child's pose for 30-60 seconds, using support if needed.
- 3 Stretch your hamstrings for 20-30 seconds each side.
- 4 Lying down, hug your knees or take a gentle, pain-free twist.
- 5 Finish with 5 natural, comfortable breaths.

DO NOT FORCE AT NIGHT

The aim is to reduce effort. If a position increases pain or discomfort, choose a simpler alternative or stop.

The calf muscle pump

Why walking and moving the ankles supports venous return.

The so-called “second heart”

“SECOND HEART” IS A METAPHOR FOR THE CALF MUSCLE PUMP. When you walk or raise your heels, the gastrocnemius and soleus muscles contract and compress the deep veins. Venous valves help prevent backflow and support the movement of blood towards the heart.

When we remain still for long periods, this mechanical assistance decreases. Standing, walking and moving the ankles regularly is therefore usually more useful than staying in one position for a long time. This mechanism does not eliminate toxins and does not replace assessment of swelling.



HEEL RAISES

10-15 slow repetitions with firm support. Rise, pause briefly and lower with control.



SEATED ANKLE PUMPS

Alternate toes and heels for 30-60 seconds. Useful during work breaks or travel.



SUPPORTED LEGS

This may feel comfortable for 3-5 minutes, but it does not treat every cause of swelling.

PRACTICAL ROUTINE • 2 TO 3 TIMES A DAY

1. Walk for 2-3 minutes. 2. Complete 10-15 heel raises. 3. While seated, move your ankles for 30-60 seconds. Begin with one set and increase gradually.

SUDDEN SWELLING IN ONE LEG, HEAT, REDNESS, PAIN OR SHORTNESS OF BREATH OR CHEST PAIN REQUIRES URGENT MEDICAL ASSESSMENT.

Build a realistic routine

Gentle consistency is often more useful than intense, occasional sessions.

Choose according to the moment

MORNING

7 minutes to mobilise

WORK

5 minutes to change positions

AFTER ACTIVITY

5 minutes of gentle static stretches

EVENING

5-8 minutes to wind down

Weekly checklist

- ☐ Practise flexibility at least twice a week.
- ☐ Include movements for both the upper and lower body.
- ☐ Combine stretching with walking, strength and balance work.
- ☐ Notice where you feel tension without judging your range.
- ☐ Increase duration and range gradually.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Persistent pain, loss of strength, tingling, instability, a recent injury or significant limitation deserve individual professional assessment.

SEEK GUIDANCE FROM A QUALIFIED EXERCISE PROFESSIONAL, YOGA TEACHER OR PILATES INSTRUCTOR.



Move with awareness

Respect your body today. Your range may change from one day to the next - and that is part of the process.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

- NHS — Flexibility exercises; How to stretch after exercising; Sitting exercises.
- HSE Ireland — Flexibility exercises; Balance exercises; Sitting exercises.
- Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust — Stretching Exercises (Physiotherapy), 2025.
- Cochrane/NCBI — Stretching to prevent or reduce muscle soreness after exercise.

SAFETY NOTE

This material is educational and does not replace medical or physiotherapy assessment or individual guidance. Stop any exercise that causes sharp pain, dizziness, numbness, shortness of breath or worsening symptoms. Pregnant people, those recovering from surgery, or anyone with joint, neurological, vascular or heart conditions should adapt the practice with professional guidance.

BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT

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