

Cervical & Thoracic Stretches

The Cervical & Thoracic Stretches are the same, because the muscles of the neck and middle back are connected. When you stretch one area, you are actually stretching both.

1. The Anchor Stretch



Hold for 20 seconds

Repeat 2 times on each side



Modified Version

Purpose: This exercise restores mobility to your neck.

Position: Use a towel to anchor your shoulders for a better supporting stretch. Stand on the towel, eliminating the slack, and keeping your elbow straight.

Action: Slowly tilt your head away from the shoulder. Keep your head facing forward and maintain a straight back. Perform 2 sets on each side, holding each set for 20 seconds.

Tip: A common mistake is raising your shoulder subtly as your head tilts. Keep your shoulders level. The towel helps to anchor down the shoulder, immobilizing it and allowing a full range of motion stretch to your neck.

Modified Version: If you feel that you need a deeper stretch, reach up and over with the opposite hand and slowly assist the stretch and relax your neck as you stretch. ***I don't recommend you do this one at first. However, if you don't feel you are getting a good stretch, then you can try this version.***

2. The Upper Back Stretch



Hold for 20 seconds
Repeat 2 times



Modified Version

Purpose: This exercise stretches one of the hardest areas of your body to reach—the upper back.

Position: With thumbs down, interlock your hands at the level of your chest in front of you.

Action: Slowly stretch your arms straight in front of you. Drop your head down and keep reaching. Continue to stretch throughout the duration. Perform 2 sets, 20 seconds each set.

Modified Version: If you have a hard time doing this stretch, you can leave your head up rather than dropping it down.

Tip: Keep in mind that this stretch is not a stretch and hold. The further you reach, the better the stretch to your upper back. Continue to reach throughout the stretch.

3. Neck Glide



Purpose: This exercise improves neck (cervical) motion and control through a sliding or gliding motion. This motion, called protraction and retraction, stretches the flexors and extensors of the neck, increasing cervical mobility, and allowing you to move your neck farther and with more control.

Position: Sit or stand with your back straight and feet flat throughout the exercise.

Action: Keep your chin level and slowly move your head forward and backward. Reach with your chin straight forward and then back. Maintain a straight back. Proper position of your head and neck is the key to results in this exercise. Perform 2 sets and 10 repetitions.

Tip: If you find this exercise difficult, imagine holding a plate on top of your head while moving your head forward and backward. Find a focal point at eye level. This may help you maintain a straight head and level chin.

4. Corner Chest Stretch



Hold for 20 seconds

Repeat 2 times

**You can also
use a doorway
if that is more
comfortable
for you**



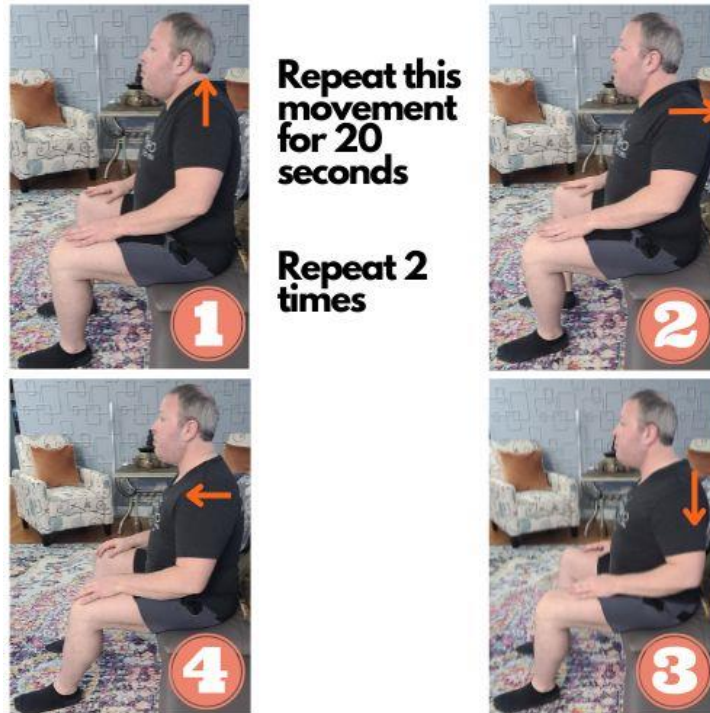
Purpose: Tight chest muscles pull the shoulders forward and cause the head to pull forward as well. This throws off the entire body's alignment. This exercise stretches the chest, restoring proper shoulder and neck position, and proper posture.

Position: Position yourself in a corner. Lift your arms so the upper arms are parallel to the floor, and rest the forearms on the wall.

Action: Slowly push straight forward, stretching out your chest muscles. Lead with your shoulders and keep the upper arms level. Stretch to the point of minimal discomfort, but don't overstretch to the point where you feel pain. Perform 2 sets, 20 seconds per set.

Tip: If you have more flexibility in your chest muscles, you can also do this stretch in a door frame.

5. Shoulder Square Shrugs



Purpose: This exercise reaches the muscles behind your neck and down your spine. It offers both stretching and strengthening benefits to the neck, enhancing your ability to reach further and move with more neck stability.

Position: In a sitting position with your back erect, lift your shoulders up, maintaining your head in a neutral position. Keep the head focused forward.

Action: Lift both shoulders, rotate back, down, and forward to complete the square. Always rotate up, then back, squeezing the shoulder blades together. Do not roll your shoulders forward. This causes impingement and unnecessary risk to the shoulder joint. Move only your shoulders, making each square motion as large as possible. If done properly, no other exercise develops the neck area muscles through as great a range of motion with as much muscle isolation as this exercise. Perform 2 sets, 20 seconds per set.

6. PVC Pass Throughs



Purpose: This stretch will increase the range of motion in your neck, upper back, and shoulders.

Position: In a standing position with your back erect and your elbows locked, hold a PVC pipe (or a broom handle or mop handle works fine) with your hands out towards the end of the pipe. The closer your hands are together, the more intense the stretch.

Action: Keeping your elbows straight, bring the pipe up over your head, then behind you. Then, bring the pipe from behind you, over your head and back to the front. Repeat this movement for 20 seconds.