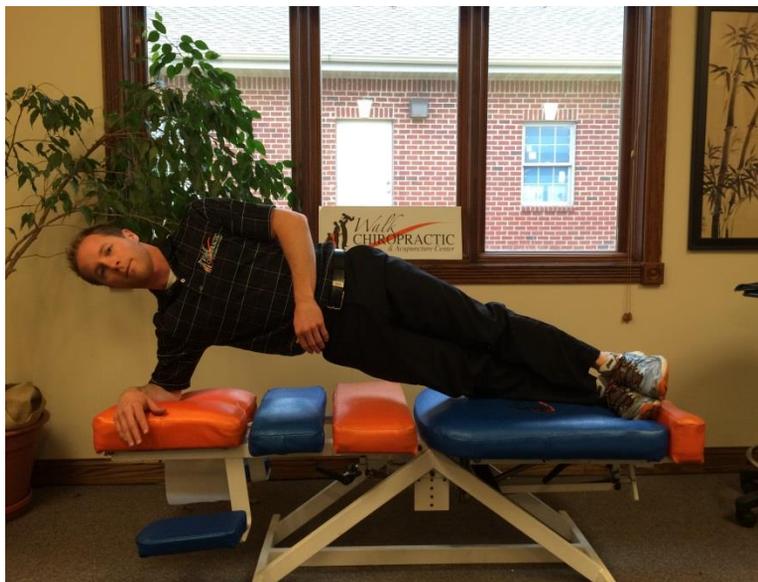


Exercise the Core

Strong abdominals can help your body to function better and can help prevent injuries by reducing the amount of stress placed on the back. The plank exercise shown below is one of the best ways to increase your core strength while minimizing stress to your low back. You may modify the exercise to make it easier by placing the pressure points on your knees instead of your feet.



Front Plank: Face down and keep your head, spine and legs straight. With pressure points on your forearms and toes (or knees to make it easier) lift your body up off the floor and hold the position to feel the burn at the front of the abdomen. With time you should be able to increase how long you can hold the position.



Side Plank: Start on your side and straighten your head, spine and legs. With pressure points on your forearms and the side of your down-side foot (or down-side knee to make it easier) lift your body up off the floor and hold the position to feel the burn at the down-side of the abdomen.

You should ask your Chiropractor, MD, therapist, trainer etc... before starting exercises or stretching. It is important to warm your muscles before stretching or performing rigorous exercises. You should never cause pain with exercises or stretching and do not bounce with the stretching maneuvers.

Stretches to help the Low Back Function Well

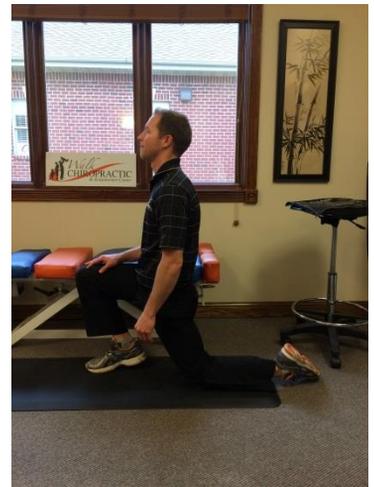
Here are a few important stretches to help the lower half of your body.



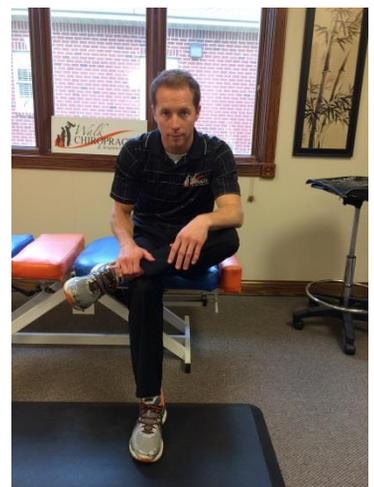
- The hamstrings attach to the low back area. It's important that they are flexible and balanced from right to left to prevent strain to the low back and allow for optimal mechanics.
- Start flat on your back with 1 leg through a doorway and the other heel up against the wall. With both legs straight, (no bending at the knees) you should feel a good burning stretch to the back of the elevated thigh. Hold the stretch for 15 seconds and then gently push against the wall for 2 seconds. Relax and you should be able to scoot slightly forward towards the wall. Gently stretch 15 seconds and repeat. Perform 3-5 times and then switch legs.



- The hip flexors attach at the low back area as well. They often tighten up as a result of too much sitting and this can cause tension at the low back
- Take a knee as shown to the left and while keeping your body upright, lunge forward to get a light stretching sensation at the front top portion of the thigh (left thigh shown in the image to the right). Hold for 15 seconds and repeat. Perform 3-5 times and then switch legs.



- The Piriformis muscle located in the glute is another cause for issues of the low back. When tight and inflamed it may cause irritation of the Sciatic nerve (sending pain down the back of the thigh (not past the knee).
- Start in a seated position and cross one ankle over the top of the opposite knee. Place your forearm on the elevated knee with slight pressure downward. Feel for the good burning stretch to the rear end of the elevated leg and if needed bend forward to feel a greater stretch. Hold for 15 seconds and repeat. Perform 3-5 times and then switch legs.



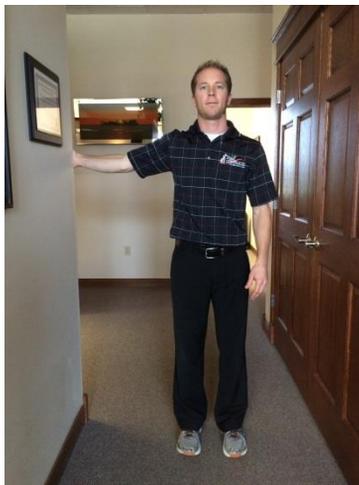
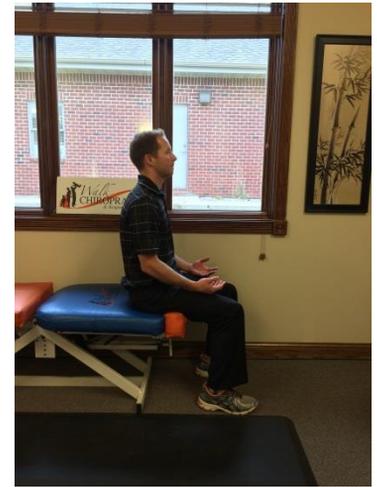
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Posture and Stretching to help the Upper Back and Neck Function Well

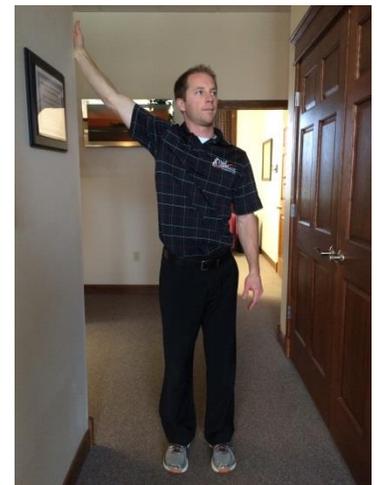
Your head is like a 12 pound bowling ball. It's important to have flexibility at the neck and upper back to allow you to sit with good posture. Bad posture puts incredible stress on your body and nervous which directly affects your health. Here are some important stretches to help the upper half of your body.



Bad posture to the left and good posture to the right. Sit up straight with your head above the rest of your spine as shown in the image to the right. Keep your shoulders down and retracted backwards and when possible it may be helpful to sit with your palms facing upwards. Don't hunch when reading or sitting at the computer and take breaks every 30 minutes to stand up and move around. A good time to work on your posture is when you're driving or riding in the car. Don't let it affect your driving but make that double chin and get your head back against the headrest



Stretch the Pectoral muscle with these stretches which will help you to keep your shoulders back. This in return helps you to more naturally keep your head back. Stand up tall with 1 arm straight across to the side and the palm holding onto a corner or doorframe. Proceed to rotate your body away from where you're holding to feel a good stretch at the Pec Major (where your arm meets your chest). Hold for 15 seconds and then move on to stretch the Pec Minor. This stretch is the same as the Pec Major but start with your arm elevated at a 45 degree angle and then rotate. Hold each position for 15 seconds and perform 3-5 times for both the right and left sides.



You should ask your Chiropractor, MD, therapist, trainer etc... before starting exercises or stretching. It is important to warm your muscles before stretching or performing rigorous exercises. You should never cause pain with exercises or stretching and do not bounce with the stretching maneuvers.