



Upper Back Stretches

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The following upper back stretches are designed to restore flexibility to the joints and muscles of the upper back. If you are injured, you should discuss the suitability of these upper back stretches with your physiotherapist prior to beginning them. Generally, they should be performed 3 times daily provided they do not cause or increase pain.

Upper Back Stretches - Basic Exercises

Shoulder Blade Squeezes

Begin sitting or standing tall with your back straight. Squeeze your shoulder blades together as hard and far as possible pain-free (figure 1). Hold for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.

Figure 1 – Shoulder Blade Squeezes



Extension in Sitting

Begin sitting tall, with your hands behind your neck. Gently arch backwards and look up towards the ceiling until you feel a mild to moderate stretch pain-free (figure 2). Repeat 10 times.

Figure 2 – Extension in Sitting



Rotation in Sitting

Begin sitting tall, with your arms across your chest. Keeping your legs still, gently rotate to one side until you feel a mild to moderate stretch pain-free (figure 3). Repeat 10 times to each side.

Figure 3 – Rotation in Sitting (left side)



Side Bend in Sitting

Begin sitting tall, back straight, hands behind your head or neck. Gently bend to one side, moving your elbow towards your hip until you feel a mild to moderate stretch pain-free (figure 4). Make sure you do not lean forwards. Repeat 10 times on each side.

Figure 4 – Side Bend in Sitting (right side)



Flexion in Sitting

Begin sitting tall, with your hands behind your neck. Gently bend forwards allowing your elbows to move towards your thighs (figure 5). Move until you feel a mild to moderate stretch pain-free. Repeat 10 times.

Figure 5 – Flexion in Sitting



Foam Roller Stretch

Place a foam roller under your upper back as demonstrated (figure 6). Breathe normally keeping your back and neck relaxed. Hold this position for 15 – 90 seconds provided it is comfortable and does not cause pain. This exercise can be progressed by taking your arms overhead.

Figure 6 – Foam Roller Stretch



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