

Stretching Exercises for the Lower Body

Leg muscles

The leg has many muscles that allow us to walk, jump, run and move. The main muscle groups:

Quadriceps

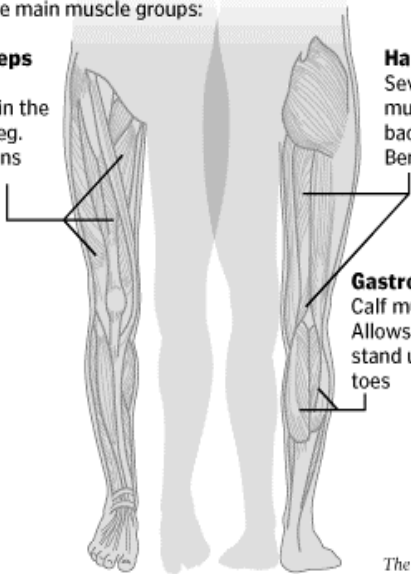
The big muscles in the front of leg. Straightens leg.

Hamstrings

Several muscles in back of thigh. Bend leg.

Gastrocnemius

Calf muscle. Allows you to stand up on your toes

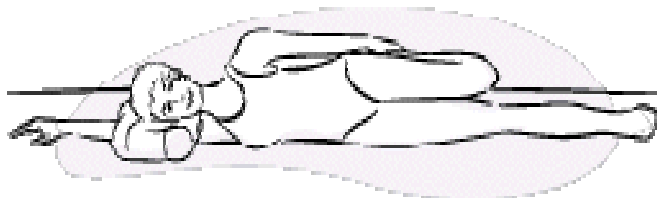


The Detroit News

Remember to:

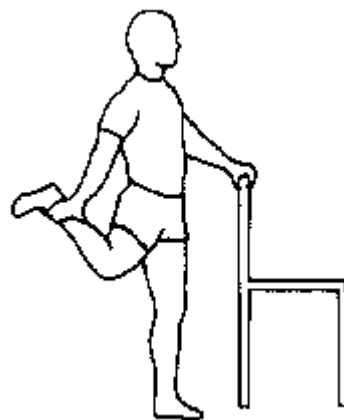
- ✓ Warm-up your muscles first before stretching (e.g. stretch after walking).
- ✓ Stretch until you feel mild discomfort, not pain.
- ✓ Never bounce or force a stretch.
- ✓ Hold the stretch for 10-30 seconds and then relax.
- ✓ Do not hold your breath when stretching.
- ✓ Do stretching exercises at least 2-3 times a week.

Quadriceps



Lying Quadriceps Stretch

Lie on your side. Pull heel toward buttocks until a stretch is felt in front of the thigh. Repeat with both legs 2-3 times.



Standing Quadriceps Stretch

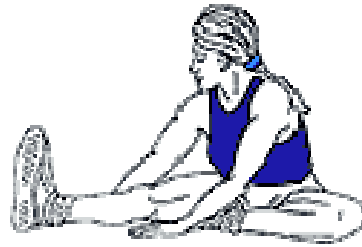
Pull heel toward buttocks until a stretch is felt in front of the thigh. Keep leg close to body with knee pointing to floor. Repeat with both legs 2-3 times.

Hamstrings



Lying Hamstring Stretch

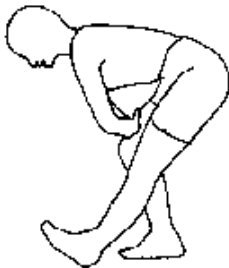
Slowly bring knee towards chest. Gently extend leg with knee slightly bent and hold when in a comfortable stretch. Repeat with both legs 2-3 times.



Sitting Hamstring Stretch

Bend knee of left leg and keep right leg extended with knee slightly bent. Bend at the waist towards your left foot. Hold your lower leg for support. Repeat with both legs 2-3 times.

Don't



Standing Hamstring Stretch

Left leg in front of you. Bend right knee. Lean forward placing hands on bent leg. Keep back straight and hold. Repeat with both legs 2-3 times.



This stretch is not advised because...

1) excessive strain to lower back, 2) common for people to bounce, which is not advised, 3) no benefit- contracts hamstring rather than lengthens it.

Calf Muscles



Gastrocnemius (Upper calf)

Hands against the wall. Keep back leg straight. Push heels down and slowly lean forward until stretch is felt in the back of the calf. Repeat with both legs 2-3 times.

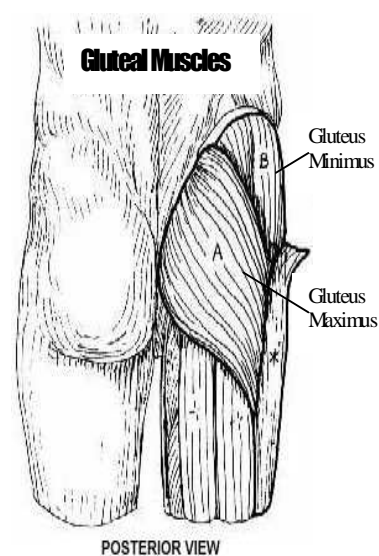
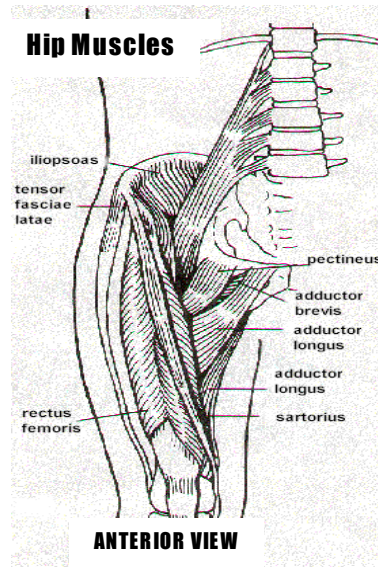


Soleus (Lower calf)

Same stretch as gastrocnemius, but bend knees of both legs. Repeat with both legs 2-3 times.

Hip and gluteal muscles

There are 4 groups of muscles around the hips: adductors (on the inside), abductors (on the lateral hip), flexors (on the anterior side) and extensors (on the posterior side). These muscles and the gluteal muscles control the movements of the hips.



Hip Adductors (Inner Thigh)



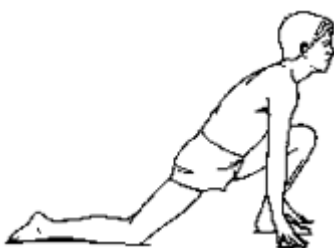
Gently push knees to floor until stretch is felt. Keep back straight. Repeat 2-3 times.

Hip Abductors



Cross your right leg over your left leg. Look over your right shoulder while turning your trunk and pushing back on knee with left elbow. Repeat with both sides 2-3 times.

Hip Flexors/Extensors



Slowly lean and push hip to floor until stretch is felt on front of hip. Repeat with both sides 2-3 times.

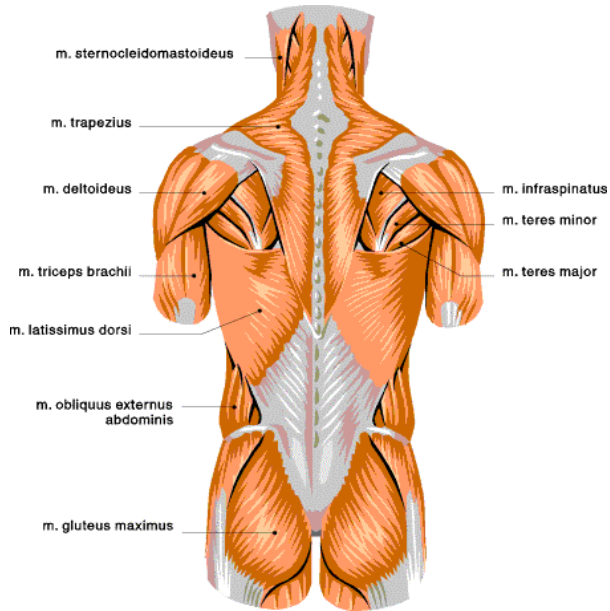
Gluteal Muscles



Place right foot above left knee. Slowly lift left leg towards chest. Keep arms flat on floor. Repeat with both legs 2-3 times.

Stretching Exercises for the Upper Body

Upper Body Muscles



Benefits of stretching:

- ✓ Improves flexibility
- ✓ Decreases risk of injury
- ✓ Reduces muscle tension
- ✓ Improves circulation
- ✓ Reduces anxiety, stress, and fatigue
- ✓ Improves muscle coordination
- ✓ Improves physical performance
- ✓ Enhances enjoyment of physical activities

Neck



Side Bends

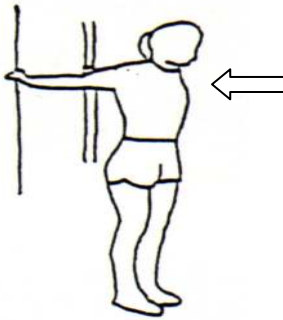
Sit or stand with hands loosely at your sides. Tilt your head sideways. Hold for 5 seconds. Switch to other side. Repeat 2-3 times.



Neck Flexion/Extension

Sit or stand with hands loosely at your sides. Gently tilt your head forward and then backwards until you feel the stretch. Repeat 2-3 times.

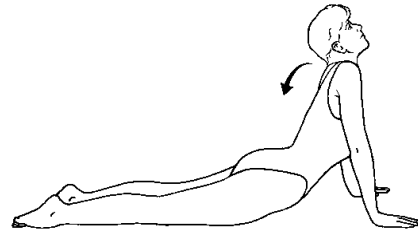
Chest



Pectoralis Major Stretch

Place both arms directly behind you against a flat surface with arms parallel to the floor. Push against flat surface until stretch is felt in chest. Repeat 2-3 times.

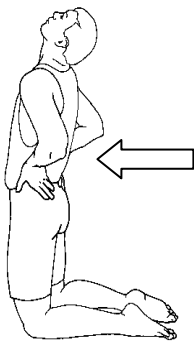
Abdominals



Lying Abdominal Stretch

Lie on front side and push upper torso upwards with arms until stretch is felt. Repeat 2-3 times.

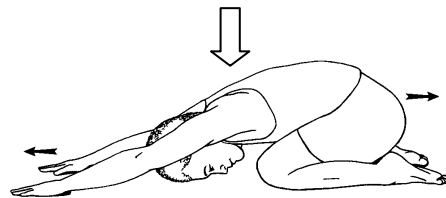
Lower Back



Mild Back Stretch

With hands on the small of the back, slightly bend back until stretch is felt. Repeat 2-3 times.

Upper Back



Latissimus Dorsi Stretch

Begin by kneeling and extending forward until stretch is felt. Slide hands forward and push buttocks backward. Repeat twice.

Shoulder



Cross-Chest Stretch

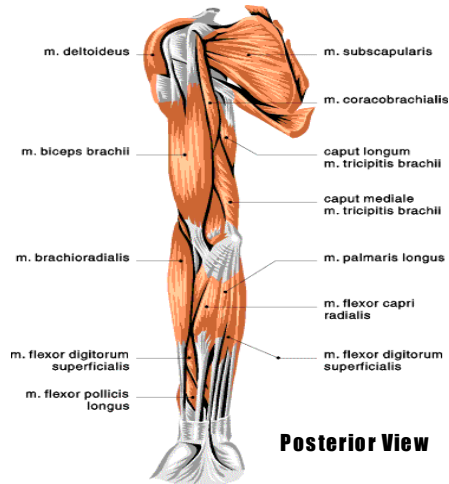
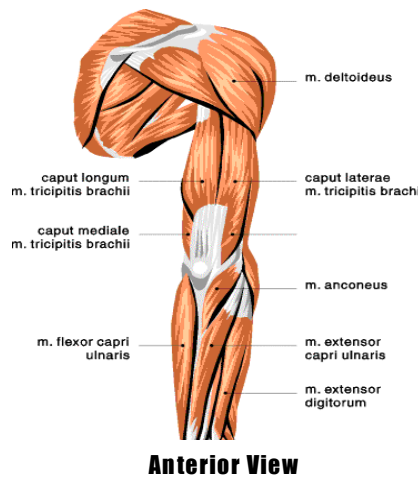
Pull your left arm across your chest and push on your elbow close to your chest with your right hand. Repeat 2-3 times on each side.



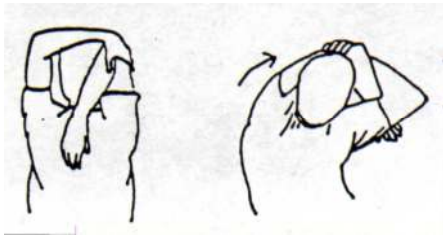
Behind the Back Stretch

Stand up and place your left hand on the small of the back. Grab your left hand and pull towards the right. Repeat 2-3 times on each side.

Arm Muscles



Arms



Triceps Stretch

Raise right arm over your head with elbow pointing towards ceiling. Pull down elbow with opposite arm and lean arm towards the opposite side. Repeat 2-3 times on each side.



Biceps Stretch

Reach arms behind your back and interlock fingers. Slightly raise arms and pull them away from your trunk. Repeat 2-3 times.