

DAILY BACK CARE GUIDE

If you or someone you know has lower back issues, read this guide, share it and pass it on.

1) CALF STRETCH

You may wonder what stretching your calves has to do with your lower back?! Your calves, along with some of the smaller muscles of your lower back, are essential posture muscles. Often, with some low back conditions, if the calves get tight, the lower back will also become tight. So, if you sit throughout the day, in a car, at a desk, or on your couch, your knees are bent, and can therefore, make your calves tight. Stretch them like this:

- Place your hands on a wall, on a counter top or the back of a chair
- Step one foot forward and one foot back
- Bend forward in to your front knee so that your front shin is straight up and down, and have your back foot far enough back that you feel you need to work a bit, to keep your back heel down
- Lift your back toes in order to reach the back heel down
- Hinge your pelvis and spine forward so that your spine is long
- Breathe here for 10 slow breaths, or about a minute
- Change sides



Courtney demonstrating a calf stretch

2. WHEN SEATED ON THE FLOOR, IN A CHAIR, ON THE COUCH OR IN THE CAR:

Make sure that the front of your pelvis/your hip bones, are the same height or higher than your knees. If your hip bones are lower than your knees, this will tighten your hip flexors, and then, pull on and tighten your lower back. Sit like this:

- First, make sure you're sitting high enough that your hip bones are the same height or higher than your knees
- Rock your pelvis forward so that you're sitting forward of your sitting bones and in a back bend - notice this extreme
- Rock your pelvis back so that you're sitting back of your sitting bones and in a rounded spine - notice this extreme
- Settle right in between where your pelvis is upright - like an upright bowl - this is where you want to be when sitting to strengthen your deepest core muscles



Backbend, too far forward



Just right

3. LAYING ON A FOAM ROLLER



Invest in a foam roller. If you need a recommendation as to which one, or where to purchase one, email me at info@movementtherapyco.com

- Make sure that your head and pelvis are on the roll
- Knees bent with your feet flat
- Arms open with your palms up or down - notice which is most comfortable on your arms and shoulders - both are beneficial, just different
- Relax your pelvis, spine, shoulders and head as much as possible
- There are natural curves to your spine, and by lying on the foam roller, these curves are given the opportunity to neutralize
- Stay here breathing deeply for 2 or 3 minutes to begin
- Over time, and slowly, work up to staying here for 3 - 5 minutes

4. QUADRICEP/HIP FLEXOR STRETCH:

If your quads or hip flexors are tight, your lower spine will be tight. There are many ways to stretch the quadriceps and hip flexors. This is just one. Pad up your back knee if you need to.

- One foot forward and one knee back
- Try for your back thigh to be straight up and down
- As you breathe, press down in to your front heel
- Lift the front of your pelvis, gently, as if you're trying to zip up a pair of tight jeans that don't quite fit any longer
- The gluteal muscle of your back thigh, try to engage it, make a muscle there, and lift in the front of your pelvis
- Use that back gluteal in order to lengthen the front of that thigh and hip flexor as you lift in the front of your pelvis
- Hold each side for at least 10 slow breaths, then change sides



Courtney demonstrating a hip flexor stretch

5. "UP AND OVER" IN YOUR RIBS:

This is my "go to". This is my, "If you do one thing physically throughout the day, do this"!

- First, notice what you think "good posture" is
- Often, "good posture" means lifting the chest and thrusting the shoulders back - this, in reality, puts pressure on the lower and mid back
- First, as an exercise, lift your chest and see how that feels
- Then, using your hands, "lift up out of your lower back and absorb your front low ribs, into your body"
- Think of stacking your ribs on top of your pelvis so that you're not leaning back. At first, you may feel like you're leaning forward - you're not! You're decompressing your lower back and strengthening your abdominals
- Now, look straight forward so that your chin is level to the floor
- This is good posture

Practice this for 5 minutes, 4 times a day - don't try to hold this position all the time - your abdominals and spine will tire - they need time to strengthen slowly. Over time, with practice, your body will stay more "up and over" on its own without as much physical effort



Standing and lifting chest



Hand placement for "up and over ribs"