



Stretching for the neck

This article will help you achieve full body flexibility, paying attention to muscles that are all too often overlooked.

Don't be surprised to find yourself tighter than you might expect with some of these stretches. These muscles tend to be overlooked in most people's flexibility routines, even though they're as important as all the other muscle groups for total body function and power.

Remember that the photos are designed to guide you through each stretch safely and effectively. Also recall that the person in each photo is representing the ideal range of motion for that particular stretch. Take your time with each stretch, and don't force anything. Each person is different. Your body will be ready for some stretches and not so ready for others. This gives you the opportunity to mark your body's adjustments and really feel the results!

You'll be pleasantly surprised at how relaxing and rewarding it is to do the neck stretches. These stretches help with many daily tasks we take for granted, such as looking over your shoulder to change lanes on the motorway or looking up to catch a ball or watch an aeroplane.

THE EXERCISES

Static head tilt (photo 1)

- Stand or sit tall. Lower one ear towards the shoulder. Gently pull down from the opposite side of the head.
- Hold the stretch for 10-30 seconds.
- Repeat on the other side.

Static diagonal head tilt (photo 2)

- Stand or sit tall. Drop the chin diagonally toward the armpit as far as comfortably possible. Place one hand on the back of the head and gently pull towards the armpit.

- Hold the stretch for 10-30 seconds.
- Repeat on the other side.

Static head turn (photo 3)

- Stand or sit tall.
- Turn the head as far to one side as comfortably possible. Place one hand on the side of the chin and gently push.
- Hold the stretch for 10-30 seconds.
- Repeat on the other side.

Dynamic head tilt (photos 4 & 5)

- Stand or sit tall.
- Lower one ear towards the shoulder while lifting the opposite ear towards the ceiling.
- Release the stretch and repeat on the other side.
- Repeat as a continuous, controlled, fluid sequence 10-12 times.

Dynamic head turn (photos 6 & 7)

- Stand or sit tall.
- Turn the head as far to one side as comfortably possible.
- Release the stretch and turn the head to the other side.
- Keep the chin up.
- Repeat as a continuous, controlled, fluid sequence 10-12 times.

Dynamic diagonal chin drop (photos 8 & 9)

- Stand or sit tall.
- Drop the chin diagonally towards the armpit as far as comfortably possible while lifting the back of the head towards the ceiling.
- Release the stretch by lifting the head to neutral position and repeat on the other side.
- Repeat as a continuous, controlled, fluid sequence 10-12 times.



Source: *Full Body Flexibility* by Jay Blahnik - see www.humankinetics.com for information.