

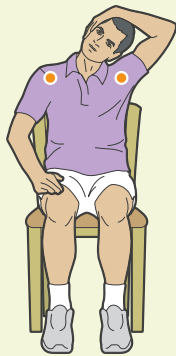
# Keep yourself flexible

As we age, our muscles can tighten, especially if we are inactive and sitting down for long periods of time. This can cause poor posture and can restrict movement around the joints, such as our knees and hips. Here are some stretches we could all be doing – regardless of our age – to help improve and maintain our flexibility.

Many aches and pains (and sometimes injuries) can be the result of a result of a muscular imbalance between your left and right sides. If any of these stretches feel more difficult on one side (and there is no health reason for this), aim to do that side twice. **Aim to do these stretches at least twice a week.** When performing these stretches, make sure you carry out each stretch slowly and under control, and remember to keep breathing normally.

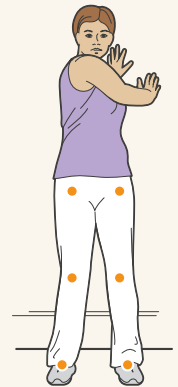
## NECK

1. Sit upright on a sturdy chair such a dining chair.
2. Tilt your head slightly to the right, bringing your right ear towards your right shoulder.
3. Lift your right arm over your head and place your right hand on left side of head. Your right elbow should be pointing towards the ceiling. Keep your shoulders down (away from your ears).
4. Do not pull on your head – just use the weight of your arm to increase the stretch down the left side of your neck.
5. Hold for between 30 seconds and a minute.
6. Repeat on the other side.



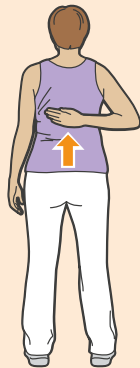
## LOWER BACK

1. Stand with your back against a wall and take one step forward.
2. Stand with your feet hip-width apart.
3. Keeping your feet, knees and hips facing forward, rotate your upper body and place both hands on the wall, if you can.
4. Then turn your head to face forwards.
5. Hold for between 30 seconds and a minute.
6. Repeat on the other side.



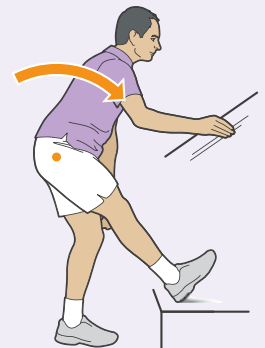
## SHOULDERS

1. Either stand up with your feet hip-width apart, or sit upright with your back away from the back of a chair.
2. Put your right hand behind your back with the palm of your right hand facing away from you.
3. If you can, move your hand slightly higher up your back, towards your shoulders.
4. Hold for between 30 seconds and a minute.
5. Repeat on the other side.



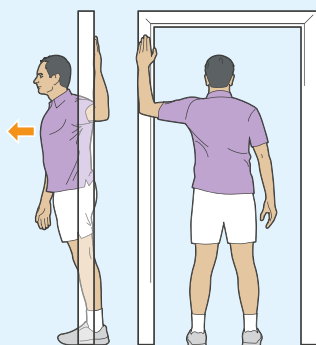
## KNEES AND HIPS

1. Standing on the floor, lift your right foot and place the heel on the bottom step or a low stool.
2. Place your hand on the banister or wall for balance, if necessary.
3. Keeping your back straight and pushing your bottom backwards, lean forward from the hips until you feel a stretch in your hamstring (the muscle at the back of your upper leg).
4. Hold for between 30 seconds and a minute.
5. Repeat on the other side.



## CHEST

1. Stand in an open doorway, with your feet hip-width apart.
2. Place your lower arm (from your hand to your elbow) on the door frame at shoulder level – your upper arm should be parallel to the floor, and your elbow bent at a right angle (90 degrees).
3. Keeping your feet flat on the floor, lean forward until you feel a slight stretch in the muscles at the front on the chest (coming down from the armpit).
4. Hold for between 30 seconds and a minute.
5. Repeat on the other side.



## ANKLES

1. Stand on the bottom step, facing up the stairs, or a low, stable stool.
2. Place your hand on the banister or wall for balance, if necessary.
3. Move your right foot backwards, so that only the front half of the foot is on the step.
4. Allow your right heel to drop so you feel a stretch in your calf (the muscle at the back of your lower leg).
5. Hold for between 30 seconds and a minute.
6. Repeat on the other side.

