

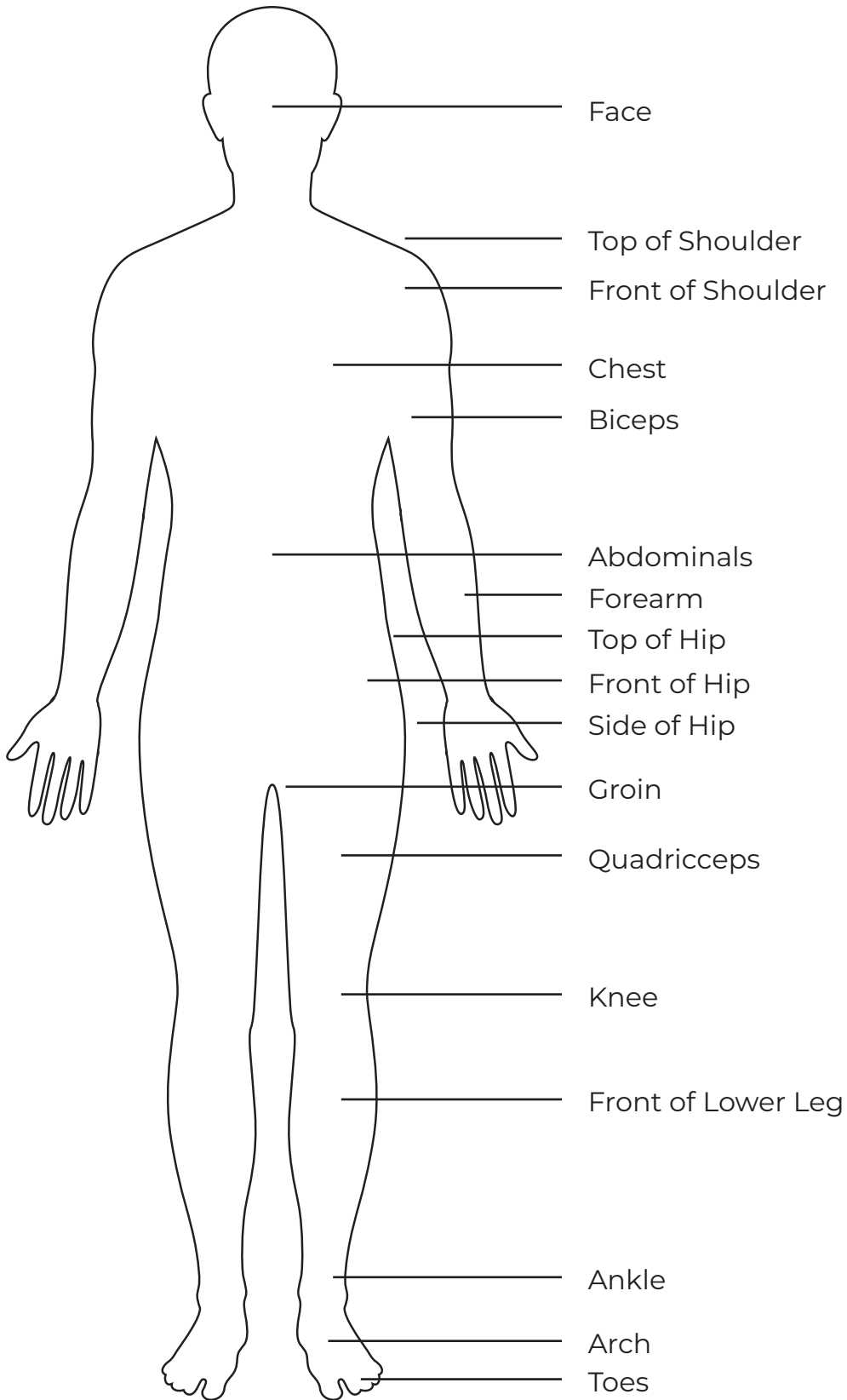
# Why Stretch?

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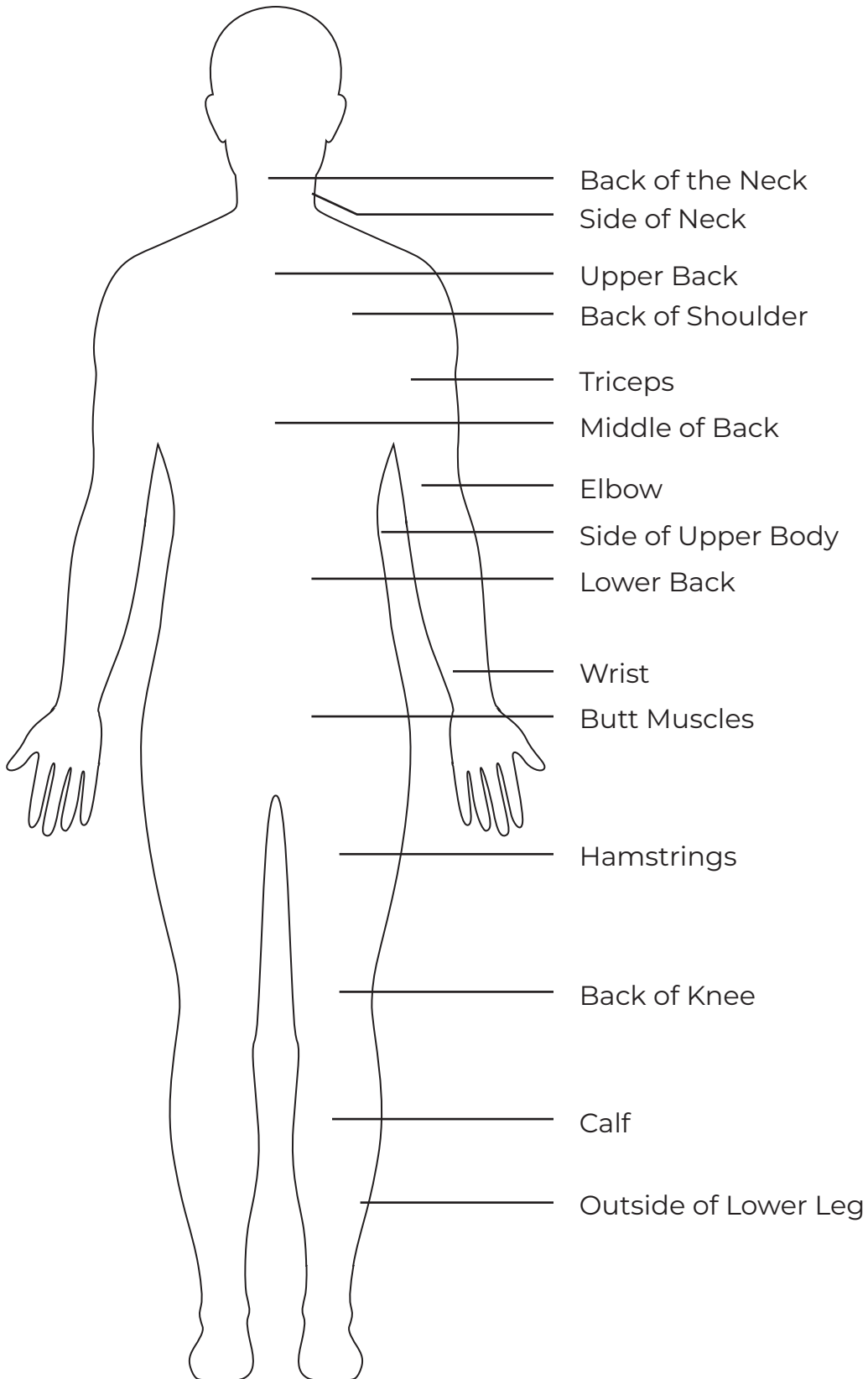


This educational brochure is based on the research of the book **Stretching by Bob Anderson** for informational purposes only.

# FRONT



# BACK



## ◆ WHO Should Stretch?

Everyone can learn to stretch, regardless of age or flexibility. You do not need to be in top physical condition or have specific athletic skills. The methods are gentle and easy, conforming to individual differences in muscle tension and flexibility.

**Note: If you have had any recent physical problems or surgery, particularly of the joints and muscles, or if you have been inactive or sedentary for some time, please consult your physician before you start a stretching or exercise program.**

## ◆ WHY Should Stretch?

Stretching should be part of your daily life because it relaxes your mind and tunes up your body. Regular stretching can help to reduce muscle tension and make the body feel more relaxed, promotes circulation, helps loosen the mind's control of the body, prepares you for activities and releases endorphins in your brain.

## ◆ HOW to Stretch?

There is a right way and a wrong way to stretch. **The right way is a relaxed, sustained stretch with your attention focused on the muscles being stretched.**

**The wrong way (unfortunately practiced by many people), is to bounce up and down, or to stretch to the point of pain: these methods can actually do more harm than good!**

If you stretch correctly and regularly, you will find that every movement you make becomes easier. It will take time to loosen up tight muscles or muscle groups, but time is quickly forgotten when you start to feel good.

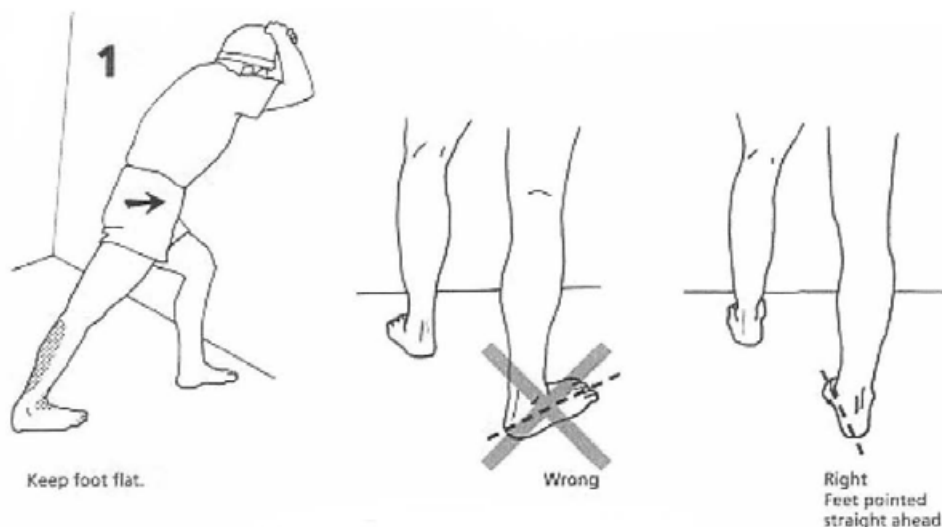
## ◆ Counting

At first, silently count the seconds for each stretch; this will ensure that you hold the tension for a long enough time. After a while, you will be stretching by the way it feels, without the distraction of counting.

# Let's Start!

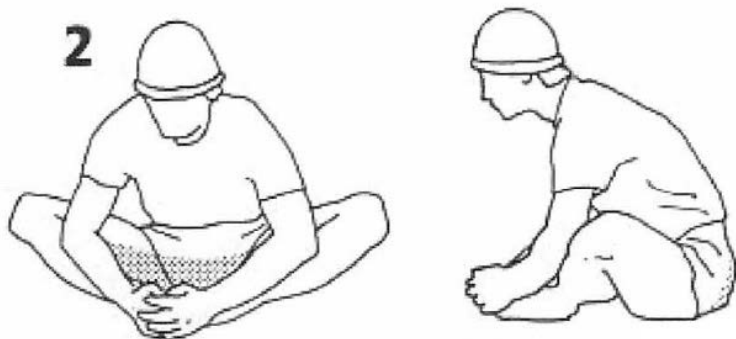
Start with a light warm-up of 2-3 minutes (walking in place while moving your arms back and forth cross your upper body).

## 1. Calf Stretch

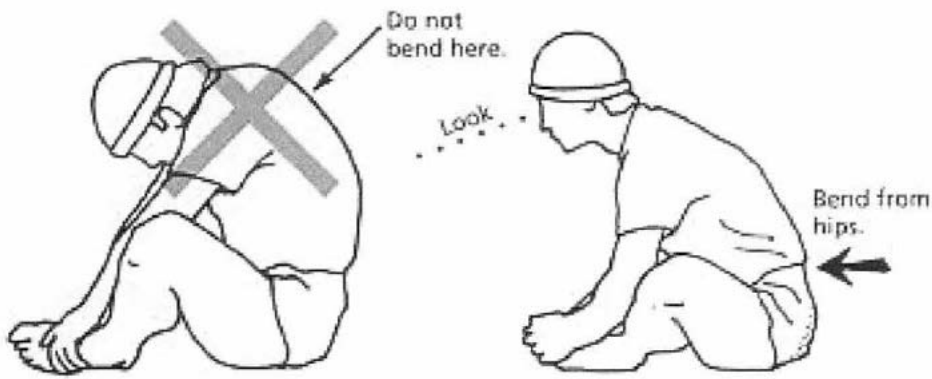


- ✓ Lean on your forearms, using a wall, or something else for support. Rest your forehead on the back of your hands. Bend one knee and bring it toward the support. The back leg should be straight, with the foot flat and pointed straight ahead or slightly toed-in.
- ✓ Now, without changing the position of your feet, slowly move your hips forward as you keep the back leg straight and your foot flat. Create an easy feeling of stretch in your calf muscle.
- ✓ Hold an easy stretch for 10 seconds. Release. Then move slightly further for another 10 seconds. Don't overstretch.
- ✓ Now stretch the other calf.

## 2. Sitting Groin Stretch



- ✓ Sit on the floor. Clasp the soles of your feet together with your hands as shown. Gently lean forward from the hips until you feel an easy stretch in your groin. Hold an easy stretch for 15 seconds. If you are doing it right, it will feel good; the longer you hold the stretch, the less you should feel it.



- ✓ Do not bend forward from your head and shoulders. This rounds the shoulders and puts pressure on lower back.
  - ✓ Concentrate on making the initial move forward from your hips. Keep your lower back flat. Look out in front of you.
  - ✓ After you feel the tension diminish slightly, increase the stretch by gently pulling yourself a little further into the stretch feeling. Now it should feel a bit more intense, but not painful. Hold for about 15 seconds.
  - ✓ Slowly come out of the stretch.
- x REMEMBER: No jerky, quick, bouncing movements!**

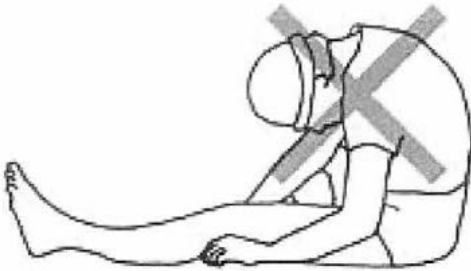
### 3. \*\*\*



- ✓ Straighten your right leg, while keeping left leg bent. The sole of the left foot should be facing the inside of the right upper leg. Straight-leg, bent-knee position.

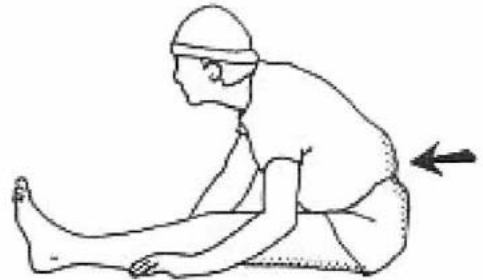


- ✓ To stretch the hamstrings and left side of the lower back (some will feel a stretch in the lower back, others won't), bend forward from your hips as you exhale until you feel a very slight stretch. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Breathe slowly and rhythmically.



**x Do not make the initial movement with your head and shoulders. Don't try to touch your forehead to your knee.**

✓ Initiate the stretch from the hips. Keep your chin in a neutral position. Keep your shoulder and arms relaxed.



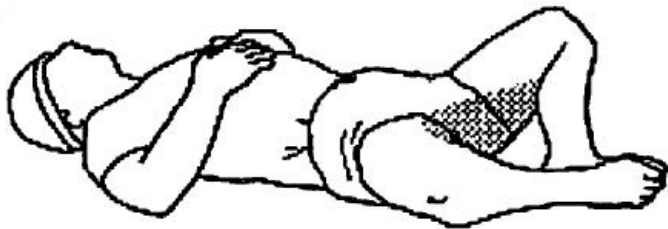
✓ Be sure the foot of the leg being stretched is upright, with the ankle and toes relaxed. This will keep you aligned through the ankle, knee, and hip.

**x Do not let your leg turn to the outside, because this causes misalignment of the ankle and hip.**



- ✓ If you are not very flexible, use a towel around the bottom of your foot to do this stretch. Do not worry about how far you can go. Remember, we all differ.
- ✓ SLOWLY, come out of stretch. Do the same stretch on the other side.

## 4. Lying Groin Stretch



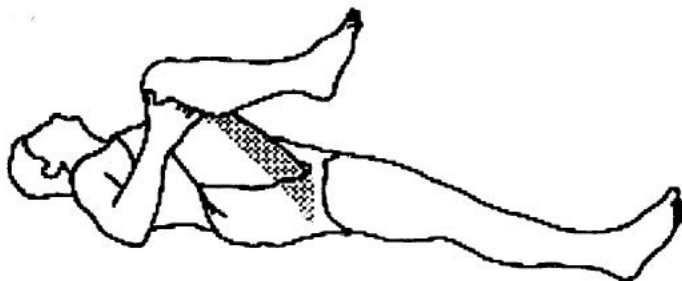
- ✓ Now lie on your back with the soles of your feet together. Let your knees fall apart. Relax your hips and let gravity give you a very mild stretch in your groin. Stay in this position for 40 seconds. Breathe deeply.

## 5. Elongation Stretch



- ✓ While lying on the floor, slowly strengthen both legs. With your arms overhead, reach out with your hands while pointing your toes. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax. Repeat 3 times.
- ✓ Each time you stretch, gently pull in your abdominal muscles to make the middle of your body thin.
- 👉 **This is a great stretch to do first thing in the morning while still in bed. It stretches arms, shoulders, spine, abdominals, as well as muscles of the rib cage, feet, and ankles.**

## 6. \*\*\*

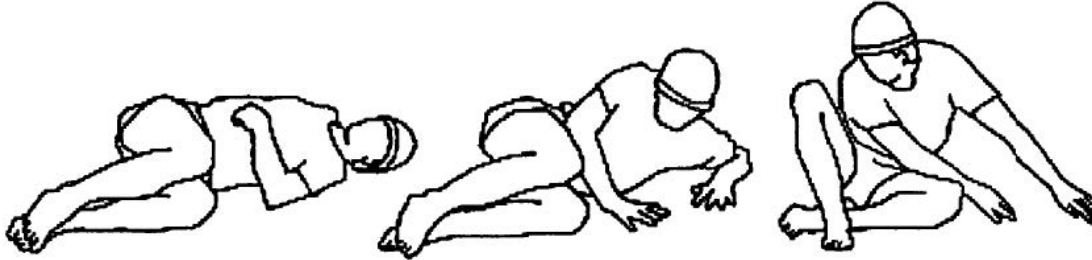


- ✓ Bend one knee and gently pull it toward your chest until you feel an easy stretch. Hold for 30 seconds. You may feel a stretch in your lower back and back of the upper leg. Do both sides and compare.
- x Do not hold your breath.**
- ✓ Repeat the Lying Groin Stretch and relax for 30 seconds. Let go of any tension in your feet, hands, and shoulders. You may do this stretch with your eyes closed.



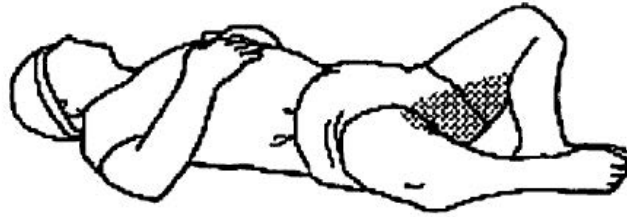
## How to Sit Up from a Lying Position

Bend both knees and roll over onto one side. While resting on your side, use your hands to push yourself up into a sitting position. By using your hands and arms this way, you take the pressure or stress off the back.



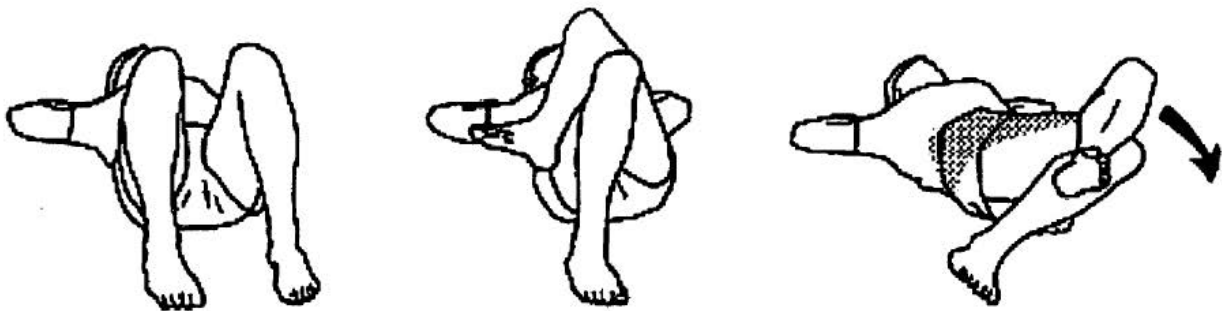
# Relaxing Stretches for Your Back

This series of stretches beneficial for your back because each position stretches a body area that is generally hard to relax. This routine may be used for mild stretching and relaxation.



- ✓ Relax, with knees bent and soles of your feet together. Hold for 30 seconds. You may want to put a small pillow behind your head for comfort.

## 1. Stretch for the Lower Back, Side and Top of Hip

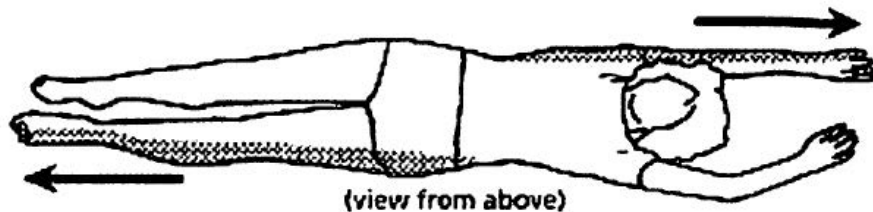


- ✓ Bring your knees together and rest your feet on the floor. Interlace your fingers behind your head with your arms on the floor.
- ✓ Lift the left leg over the right leg.
- ✓ From here, use your left leg to pull your right leg toward the floor until you feel a good stretch along the side of the hip or in the lower back. Exhale as you go into the stretch, then breath rhythmically.
- ✓ Relax. Keep the upper back, back of the head and shoulders on the floor. Hold for 10-20 seconds.
- ✓ **REMEMBER: The idea is not to touch the floor with your right knee, but to stretch within your limits!**
- ✓ Repeat on the other side.

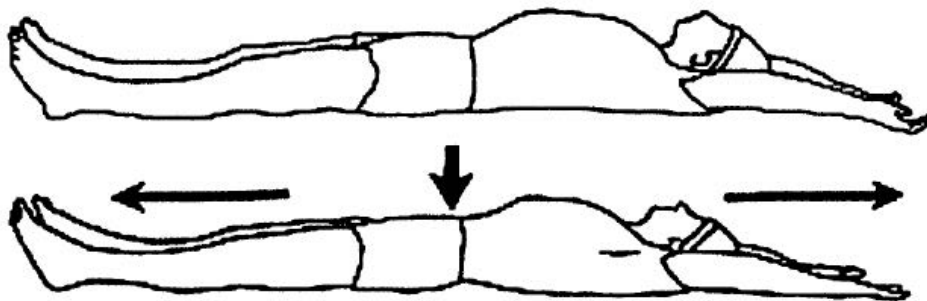
## 2. Elongation Stretches



- ✓ Extend your arms overhead and straighten out your legs. Now reach as far as comfortable in an opposite direction with your arms and legs. Stretch for 5 seconds, then relax.



- ✓ Now, stretch diagonally. Point the toes of your left foot as you extend your right arm. Stretch as far as possible. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax. Stretch the right leg and the left arm the same way.



- ✓ Now, at the same time, stretch both arms and both legs again. Hold for 5 seconds. As a variation, pull in with the abdominal muscles as you stretch. This will make you feel slim and is great exercise for your internal organs.

Doing these elongation stretches three times will reduce tension and tightness and relax your spine and entire body. They help reduce overall body tension quickly. You could do these just before sleeping.

### 3. A Stretch for the Lower Back and Side of Hip



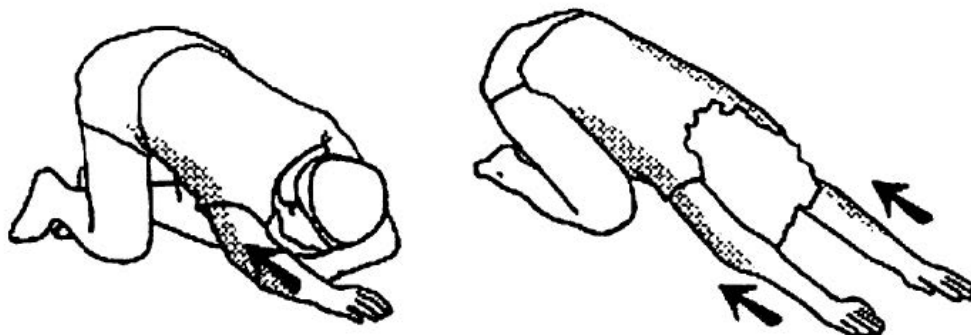
- ✓ Bend your left knee at 90 and with your right hand, pull that bent leg up and over your other leg. Turn your head to look toward the hand of the left arm that is straight out from the shoulder (head should be resting on floor, not held up).
- ✓ Now, using the right hand on your left thigh (resting just above the knee) pull your bent (left) leg down toward the floor until you get a mild stretch feeling in your lower back and side of hip. Relax your feet and ankles and keep the back of your shoulders flat on the floor. Hold on easy stretch for 15-20 seconds, each side.



- ✓ To increase the stretch in your buttocks, reach under your right leg and behind your knee. Slowly pull your right knee toward your opposite shoulder until you get a mild stretch. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Do both legs.

### 4. Stretches for the Back, Shoulders and Arms

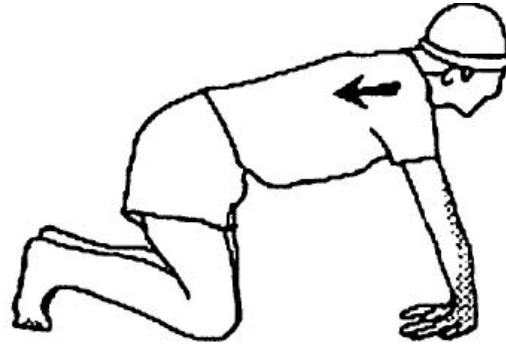
Many people suffer from tension in the upper body because of stress in their lives. Quite a few muscular athletes are stiff in the upper body because of not stretching that area.



- ✓ With legs bent under you, reach forward with your hands, then pull back with straight arms while you press down slightly with your palms.

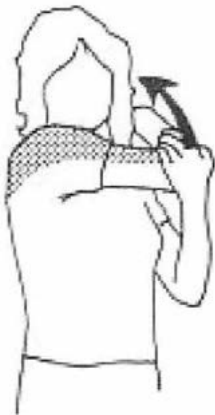
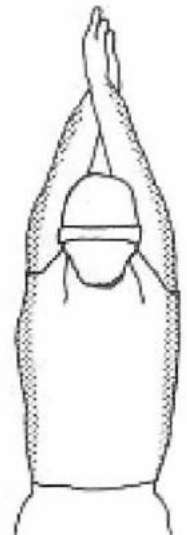
- ✓ You can do this stretch one arm at a time or both at the same time. Pulling with just one arm provides more control and isolates the stretch on either side. You should feel this in your shoulders, arms or sides, upper back, and even your lower back. Be relaxed. **Do not strain.** Hold for 15 seconds.

## 5. A Forearm and Wrist Stretch



- ✓ Support yourself on your hands and knees. Thumbs should be pointed to the outside, with fingers pointed toward knees. Keep palms flat as you lean back to stretch the front part of your forearms. Hold an easy stretch for 10-20 seconds. Relax, then stretch again. You may find you are very tight in this area.

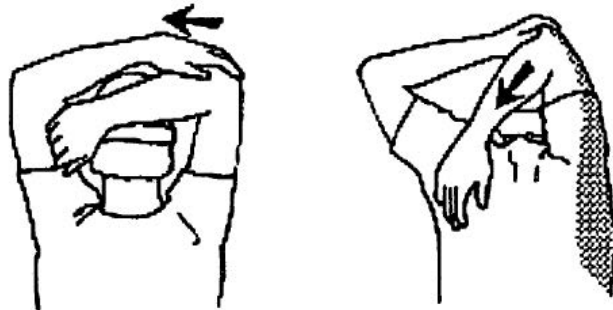
- ✓ Standing position. With arms extended overhead and palms together as drawing shows, stretch your arms upward and lightly backward. Breathe in as you stretch upward. Hold for 5-8 seconds, as you breathe easily.



- ✓ To stretch your shoulder and the middle of your upper back, gently pull your elbow across your chest toward your opposite shoulder. Hold for 10 seconds.



- ✓ Contract-Relax-Stretch. Stand with knees slightly flexed. With your left hand, hold the outside of your right arm just above your elbow. Move your right arm away from your body as you resist with your left hand. Hold an isometric contraction from 3-4 seconds. After relaxing a moment, gently pull your right arm across your body toward your shoulder until you feel a comfortable stretch in the outside of your shoulder and upper arm. Hold for 10 seconds, then repeat to other side.

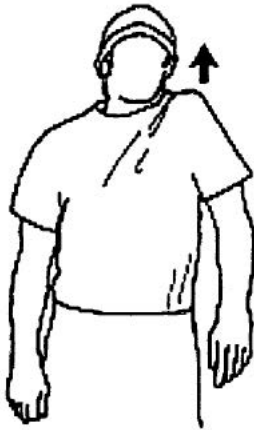


- ✓ With arms overhead, hold the elbow of one arm with the hand of the other arm. Gently pull the elbow behind your head, creating a stretch. Do it slowly. Hold for 15 seconds. **Do not hold your breath.** Do both sides.



- ✓ Interlace your fingers out in front of you at shoulder height. Turn your palms outward as you extend your arms forward to feel a stretch in your shoulders, middle of upper back, arms, hands, fingers, and wrists. Hold an easy stretch for 15 seconds, then relax and repeat.

## 6. Single Shoulder Shrug

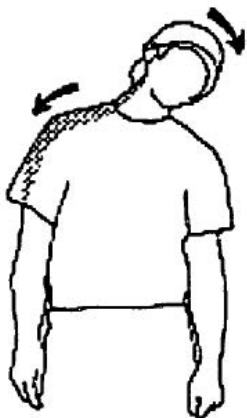


- ✓ Start with your shoulders relaxed downward. Bring your left shoulder up toward your left ear lobe. Hold from 3-5 seconds. Relax your shoulder downward and repeat on other side.

## 7. Single Shoulder Shrug

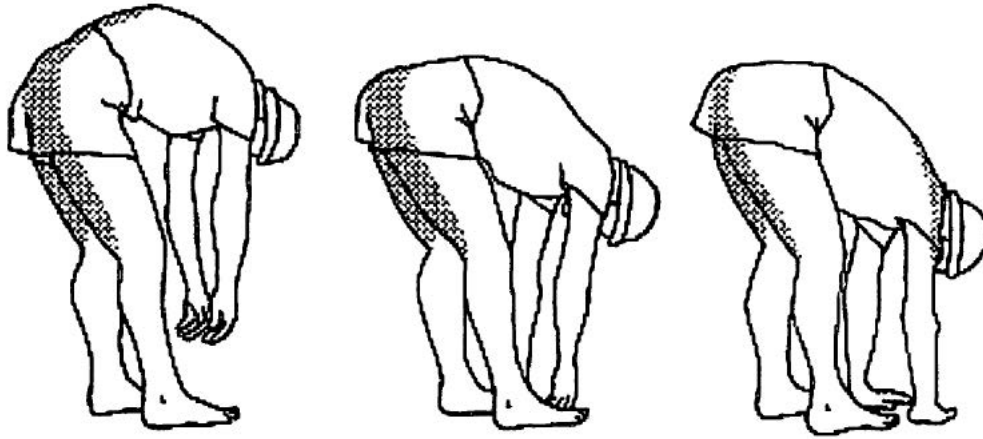


- ✓ Same as Single Shoulder shrug. Raise the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel a slight tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold for 5 seconds. Then relax shoulders downward.



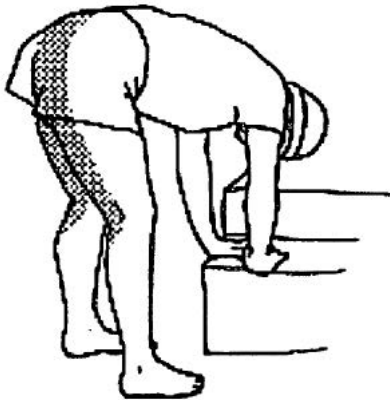
- ✓ Then gently lower your right shoulder downward as you lean your head, with your ear toward your left shoulder. Hold a comfortable stretch for 5 seconds, then repeat on your other side.

## 8. Stretches for the Lower Back, Hips, Groin, and Hamstrings:



✓ Feet shoulder-width apart and pointed straight ahead. Slowly bend forward from the hips. Keep your knees slightly bent during this stretch so your lower back is not stressed. Let your neck and arms relax. Go to the point where you feel a slight stretch in the back of your legs. Stretch in this easy phase for 10-15 seconds, until you are relaxed.

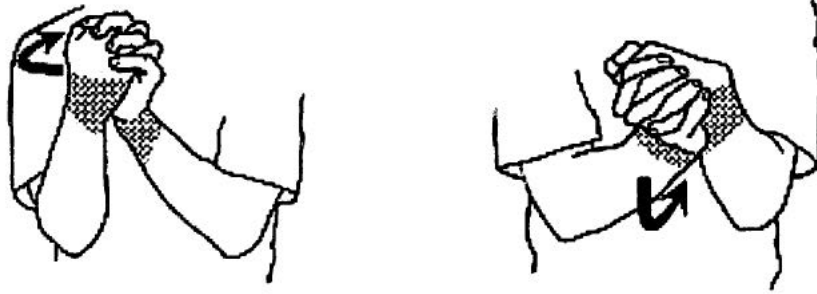
**x Do not stretch with your knees locked or bounce when you stretch.**



✓ You will find it easier to hold this stretch if you can distribute your weight between your arms and legs. If you are unable to reach your toes (or ankles) with your knees slightly bent, then use a stair or curb, or pile of books to rest your hands on.



## A Series of Stretches for Hands, Wrists and Forearms (Sitting or Standing)



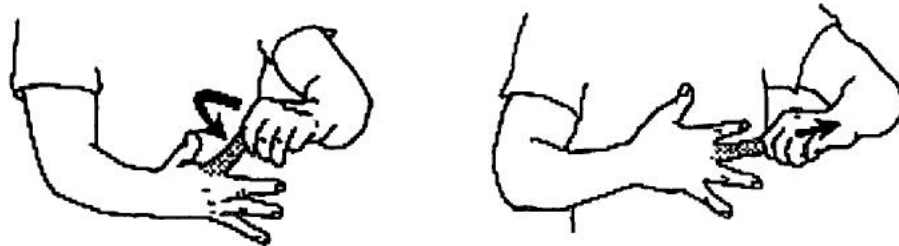
- ✓ First, interlace your fingers in front of you and rotate your hands and wrists clockwise 10 times.
- ✓ Repeat counterclockwise 10 times. This will improve the flexibility of your hands and wrists and provide a slight warm-up.



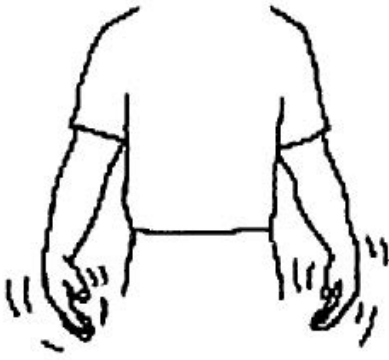
- ✓ Then separate and straighten your fingers the tension of a stretch is felt. Hold for 10 seconds, then relax.
- ✓ Next, bend your fingers at the knuckles and hold for 10 seconds.



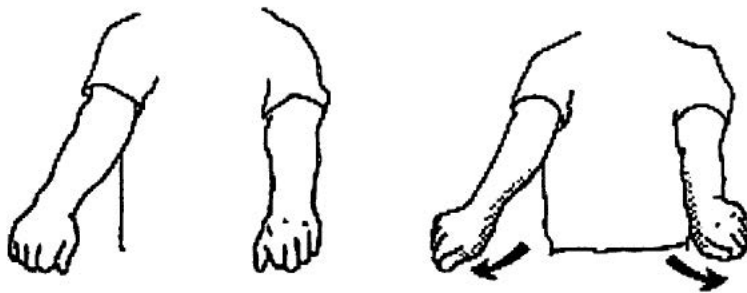
- ✓ Now, with your arms straight out in front of you, bend your wrists with fingers pointing upwards. This will stretch the back of your forearms. Hold for 10-12 seconds. Do twice.
- ✓ Then bend your wrist with your fingers pointing downwards to stretch the top of your forearms. Hold for 10-12 seconds. Do twice.



- ✓ With your index finger and thumb gently hold a finger or the thumb of the opposite hand. Rotate each finger and thumb 5 times clockwise and counterclockwise.
- ✓ Gently pull each finger and thumb straight out and hold for 2-3-seconds.



- ✓ Shake your hands at your sides for 10-12 seconds. Keep your jaw relaxed and let your shoulders hang downward as you shake out tension.

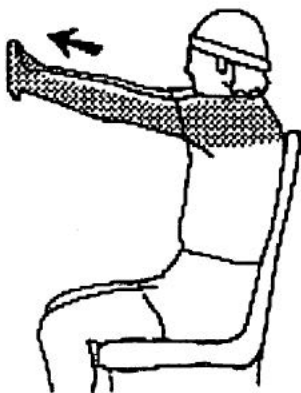


- ✓ Start with your arms straight out in front of you. Slowly turn your hands to the outside (as you keep your arms straight) until a stretch is felt along the inside forearms and wrists. Hold for 50-0 seconds.



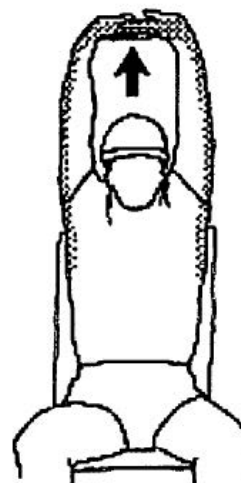
- ✓ Place your hands pal-to-palm in front of you. Then, move your hands downward, keeping your palms together, until you feel a mild stretch. Hold for n 5-8 seconds.

## Sitting Stretches

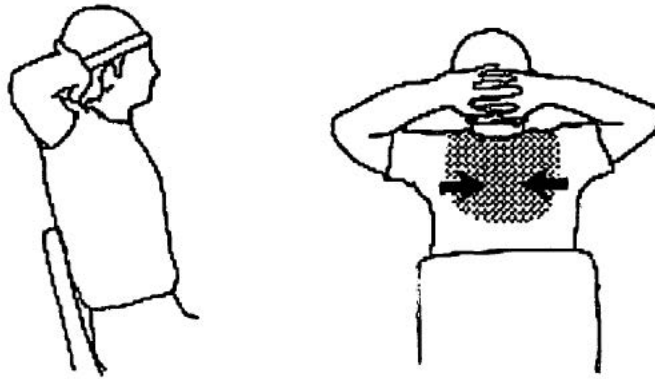


- ✓ Interlace your fingers, then straighten your arms out in front of you with palms facing out. Feel the stretch in arms and through upper part of back (shoulder blades). Hold stretch for 20 seconds. Do at least twice.

- ✓ Start with your arms straight out in front of you. Slowly turn your hands to the outside (as you keep your arms straight) until a stretch is felt along the inside forearms and wrists. Hold for 50-0 seconds.

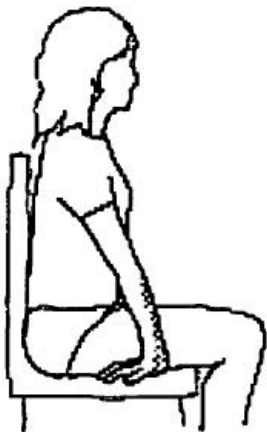


- ✓ With arms extended overhead, hold onto the outside of your left hand with right hand and pull your left arm to the side. Keep arms as straight as comfortably possible. Hold for 10 seconds. Do both sides.



- ✓ With your fingers interlaced behind your head, keep your elbows straight out to the side with your upper body in a good, aligned position. Now think of pulling your shoulder blades together or create a feeling of tension through the upper back and shoulder blades. Hold with a feeling of releasing tension, for 4-5 seconds and then relax. Do several times.

- ✓ With our left hand hold your right arm just above the elbow. Now gently pull your elbow toward your left shoulder as you look over your right shoulder. Hold stretch for 10 seconds. Do both sides.



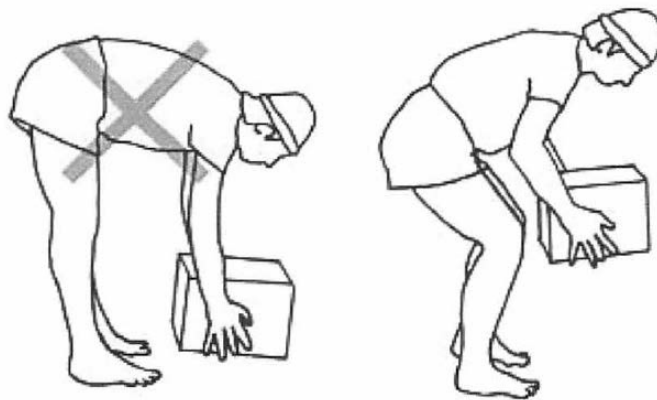
- ✓ With the palm of your hand flat, thumb to the outside and fingers pointed backward, slowly lean back to stretch your forearm. Be sure to keep palms flat. Hold for 10 seconds. You can stretch both forearms at the same time.

## Caring for Your Back

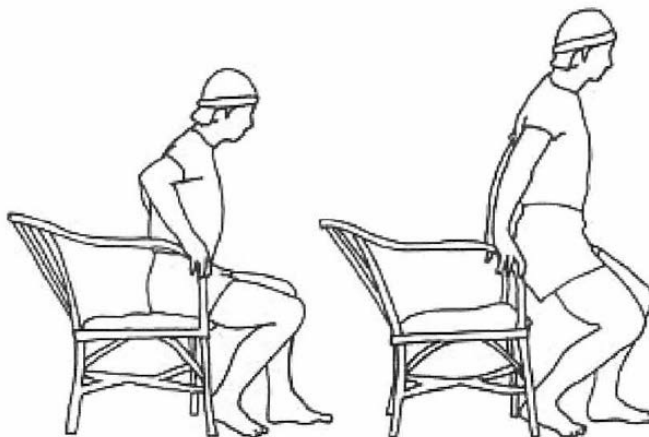
More than 50 percent of all Americans will suffer from some sort of back problem some time during their lives. Some problems may be congenital, such as sway back. Others may be the results of an automobile accident, a fall or sports injury. But most back problems are simply due to tension and muscular tightness, which come from poor posture, being overweight, inactivity, and lack of abdominal strength.

Stretching and abdominal exercises can help your back if done with common sense. If you have a back problem, consult a reliable physician who will give you tests to see exactly where the problem lies. The best way to take care of your back is to use proper methods of stretching, strengthening, standing, sitting, and sleeping. For it is what we do moment to moment, day to day, that determines our total health.

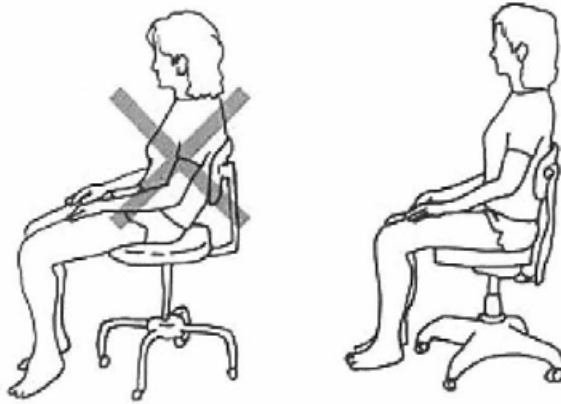
### Some Suggestions for Back Care and Posture



- ✓ Never lift anything with your legs straight. Always bend your knees when lifting something, so the bulk of the work is done by the big muscles of your legs, not the small muscles of your lower back. Keep the weight close to your body and your back as straight as possible.



- ✓ Getting in and out of chairs can be a hazard to your back. Always have one foot in front of the other when rising from a chair. Move your bottom to the edge and, with your back vertical and chin in, use your thigh muscles and arms to push yourself straight up.



- ✓ If your shoulders are rounded and your head tends to droop forward, bring yourself into new alignment. This position, when practiced regularly, will lessen back tension, and keep the body fresh with energy. Pull your chin in slightly, with the back of your head being pulled straight up. Think of your shoulders being down. Breathe with the idea that you want the middle of your back to expand outward. Tighten your abdominal muscles as you flatten your lower back into the chair. Do this while driving or sitting to take pressure off the lower back. Practice this often and you will naturally train your muscles to hold this more alive alignment without conscious effort.



- ✓ If you stand in one place for a period, as when cooking or doing the dishes, prop one foot up on a box or short stool. This will relieve some of the back tension that comes from prolonged standing.

- ✓ A good, firm sleeping surface helps in back care. If possible, sleep on one side or the other. Sleeping on your stomach can cause tightness in the lower back. If you sleep on your back, a pillow under your knees will keep your lower back flat and minimize tension.



Many tight and so-called bad backs can be caused by excessive weight around the middle. Without the support of strong abdominal muscles, this extra weight will gradually cause a forward pelvic tilt, causing pain and tension in the lower back.

1. Develop the abdominal muscles by regularly doing abdominal curls. Exercise within your limits. It takes time and regularity. But if you do not get into it, the condition will only worsen.
2. Develop the muscles of the chest and arms by doing knee push-ups. These push-ups isolate the muscles in the upper body without straining the lower back. Start an easy three-set routine such as 10-8-6, or whatever – just get started!
3. Stretch the muscles in the front of each hip and stretch the muscles of the lower back. By strengthening the abdominal area and stretching the hip and back areas, you can gradually undo the forward pelvic tilt that is, in so many cases, the main cause of back problems.
4. Slowly let the size of your stomach shrink by not overeating.
5. Learn how to walk before you jog, and jog before you run. If you walk a mile a day (at one time) every day, without increasing your calorie intake, you will lose ten pounds of fat in one year.