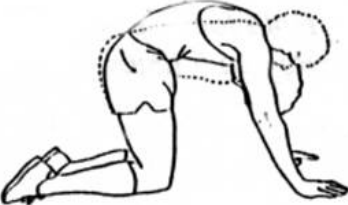
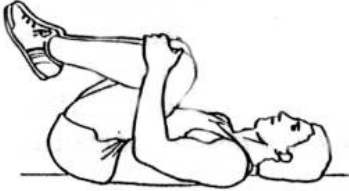







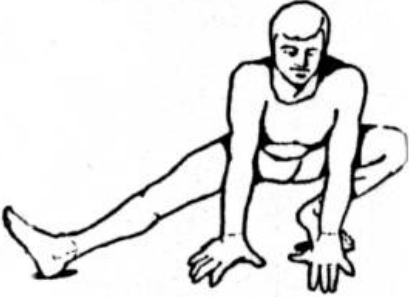
EVERYDAY FLEXIBILITY MOVES

by Janice H Hoffman

GUIDELINES TO REMEMBER:

- Gently move into the positions described below
- Don't tug, bounce, or go beyond a feeling of easy stretching
- Moving through these positions, be conscious of taking nice relaxing inhales and exhales

MIDDLE AND LOW BACK		<p>-This is sometimes called the 'cat stretch'. Start on the floor on hands and knees. Imagine the mid-back being gradually lifted up toward the ceiling.</p> <p>-CHAIR VERSION: Sit a little bit away from the chair back, put hands on thighs or otherwise extended out front, lean gently forward, and gradually move the mid-back toward the back of the chair.</p>
LOW BACK		<p>-Start face up, on the floor. Bring the thighs toward the chest. This will automatically press the low back into the floor and lengthen the low back muscles. It's OK to let the tailbone lift up off the floor.</p> <p>-CHAIR VERSION: Sit all the way back in the chair seat, then gradually lean forward, walking hands down past the knees, and feeling the stretch move toward the low back the more you lean forward.</p>
MODIFIED LOW BACK		<p>-It's OK to lift just one leg at a time if hugging both knees to the chest is too hard at first.</p> <p>-CHAIR VERSION: The same as above but modify by not leaning as far forward.</p>
LOW BACK / HIP ROTATORS		<p>-Start on the floor, face up, arms extended out to each side. Gradually move both knees to one side. Modify by bringing one arm back in toward the torso, then slightly turning the torso the same direction as the legs, letting the shoulder blade come off the floor.</p> <p>-CHAIR VERSION: Place both hands on the outside of one thigh and turn the torso to that side.</p>

<p>BACKSIDE / OUTER THIGH</p>		<p>-This image shows a very flexible person! Start on the floor, face up, legs extended. Lift one leg, bend at the knee, and gradually bring that leg across the torso. Just crossing slightly over the torso is fine to start.</p> <p>-CHAIR VERSION: Either lift one leg, bend the knee, and place that ankle on top of the other leg's thigh, (pretty flexible!) or lift one thigh off the chair seat and move it toward the center and over the other thigh. Leaning forward and sideways, away from the bent leg, will deepen the stretch.</p>
<p>OUTER HIP / SIDE OF TORSO</p>		<p>-My classes tell me this stretch eases tender point pain in the high hip area. From a standing position, cross one leg over the other. Lean to one side, moving the hips toward the other side. Keep the back leg straight. Lean gradually and gently (the picture shows a very deep stretch).</p> <p>-CHAIR VERSION: It can be tough to stretch the high hip seated, but leaning to one side will provide a stretch for the side of the torso.</p>
<p>BACK OF THIGH</p>		<p>-Many people have tight 'hamstrings', with fibromyalgia or not. Start on the floor, face up. It's hard to see in the picture, but it's important to keep the shoulder blades on the floor, and there's no need to lift the head up, either. If there's a problem with reaching the leg, a long towel, belt, or theraband can be wrapped under the ball of the foot to "extend" the arms. If the toes are pointed straight to the ceiling, that's considered good flexibility.</p> <p>-CHAIR VERSION: Sit away from the chair back and extend one leg straight out, with the heel touching the floor. Lean forward from the hips, keeping the back very flat, "like a table top".</p>
<p>INNER THIGH / OUTER THIGH</p>		<p>- Begin seated on the floor. Extend one leg to the side. Keep the other leg bent. Lean forward. The extended leg stretches the inner thigh; bent leg stretches outer thigh.</p> <p>-CHAIR VERSION: Fair warning to women; this is not particularly ladylike. Scoot back in the chair. Move knees wide apart. Hold onto the seat front. Lean forward with back flat.</p>

FRONT OF THIGH



-If you sit a lot, this stretch is really important. If there's any knee discomfort in this position, do the chair version instead. Begin on the floor, on knees. Place one foot out to the front, far away, at a greater than 90 degree angle. Gradually lean forward until a gentle stretch is felt at the area between the torso and the top of the leg.

-CHAIR VERSION: Sit sideways in a chair, near the front of the seat. (One 'bun' will be almost off the seat, so use a non-tip, sturdy chair!) Gradually begin moving the foot backward, behind the body. Go slowly, and stop when a gentle stretch is felt.

BACK OF LOWER LEG



-To begin, face a wall, place the hands on the wall, and then step one leg backward. In this classic calf stretch, the back heel needs to be pressed down and touching the floor. The right position is a 'full body' lean, without letting the backside pop up, so tuck the tailbone under and toward the wall, also moving the hips toward the wall.

-CHAIR VERSION: Extend one leg straight out front, with the heel touching the floor. Lift the toes upward, as if trying to touch them to the shin bone. Using an "arm extender" like a long towel, belt or theraband helps provide a deeper stretch.

FRONT OF TORSO / ABDOMINAL WALL



-Begin on the floor, face down, hands by the shoulders. Press the palms down and bring the shoulders off the ground, resting on elbows to start. Lifting off the elbows, upward onto the hands, is a more advanced stretch. NOTE: It's very important not to throw the head back or look up; just look straight ahead.

-CHAIR VERSION: Sit well back in the chair, and gently arch backward, lifting the chest toward the ceiling. Again, it's important not to look up at the ceiling. This stretch is about creating a curve in the mid-to-low back area; please avoid arching backward at the neck.

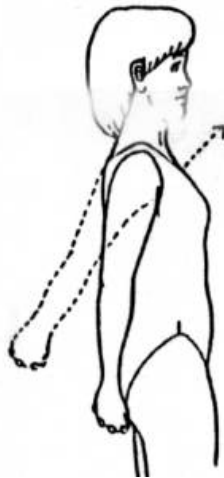
UPPER
TORSO /
CHEST



-Tender point pain across the upper body can lead to shoulders protectively rolled in, creating tight chest muscles. This stretch is very helpful when done consistently, allowing the shoulders, over time, to move backward into good alignment. Facing a corner, brace the arms, with hands no higher than shoulder height, on each wall. Lean forward. This can also be done in a narrow doorway, but please keep the hands at shoulder height or below.

-CHAIR VERSION: Position the arms just as shown in the picture, keeping the elbows low. Gradually move the hands and elbows backward, while leaning the torso forward. The back stays flat.

FRONT OF
SHOULDERS



-Upper body pain can also cause us to hold the shoulders in a protective pose; tense and lifted up. To begin, either touch the tops of the hands to the small of the back, or (if you're very flexible) clasp hands behind the back. Take a nice deep breath in and, while exhaling, gently press the shoulders backward and down.

-CHAIR VERSION: Sit forward a bit in the chair and put the fists on the chair seat on each side of the body. Slowly walk the fists backward, then gently pull the shoulders backward and down.

BACK OF
NECK



-Chin to chest, easy as pie. Begin by taking a nice breath in, then tuck the chin in and exhale while moving the head forward and down.

Just don't press down hard into this- let gravity gradually pull the head downward. Relax the shoulders down and forward to let the upper back move into the stretch too.

SIDE OF
NECK



-Turn the head to face one corner and then tuck the chin in and down, toward the collarbone. There's no need to use the fingertips, as shown, to bring the head down unless it feels perfectly OK to you.

Again, don't press hard (or at all, if it's uncomfortable) and let gravity provide a gradual pull.