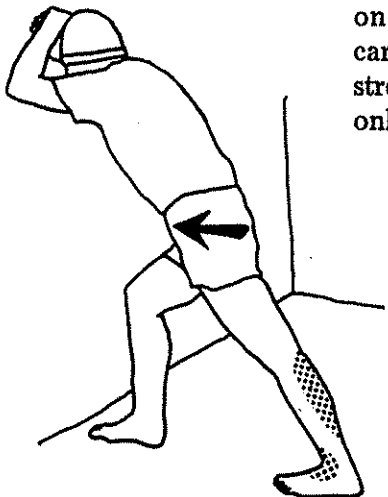
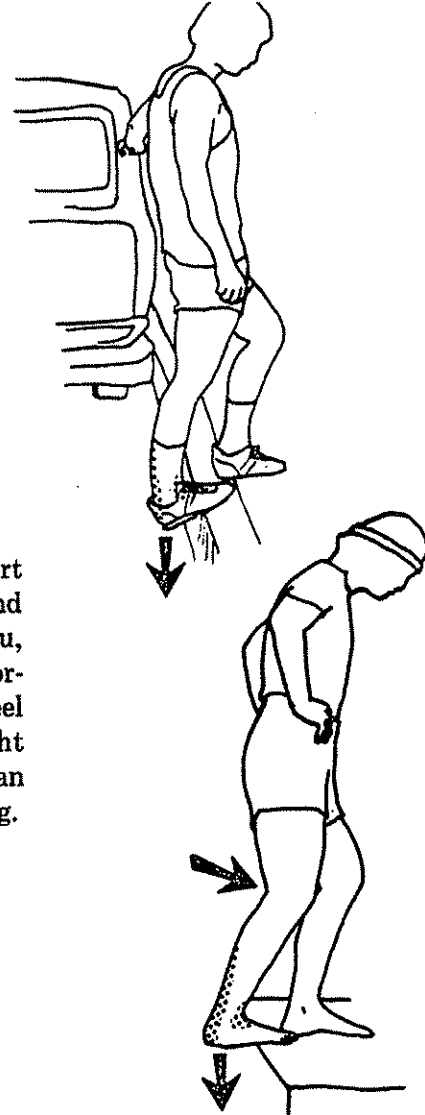


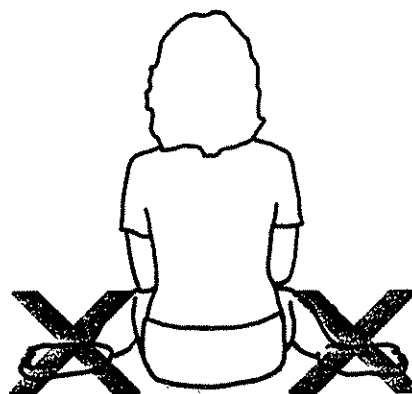
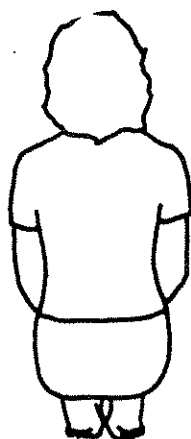
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## **Stretches for the Legs and Hips**

Place the ball of your foot on the edge of a curb or stair, with the rest of the foot hanging down over the edge. Lower the heel below the level of the stair or curb. Go slowly and work on balance. You may need to hold on to the stair railing or a car for balance. The leg of the Achilles tendon and ankle being stretched should be kept straight. Stretch in the easy phase only. Hold for 20 seconds.

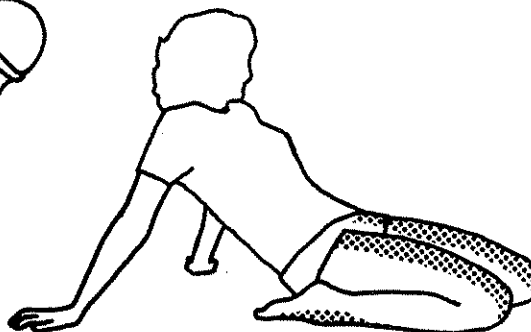
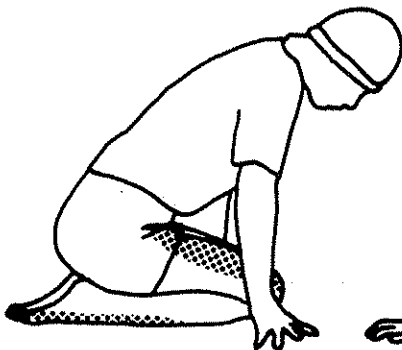
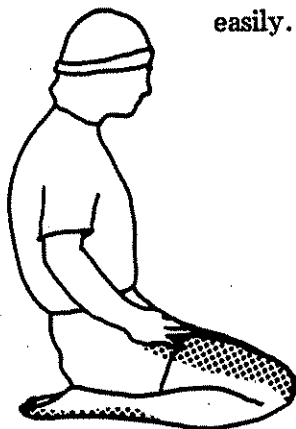


To stretch your calf, stand a little ways from a solid support and lean on it with your forearms, head resting on hands. Bend one leg and place your foot on the ground in front of you, with the other leg straight behind. Slowly move your hips forward, keeping your lower back flat. Be sure to keep the heel of the straight leg on the ground, with toes pointed straight ahead or slightly turned in as you hold the stretch. Hold an easy stretch for 30 seconds. Do not bounce. Stretch other leg.



This position helps stretch the knees, ankles, and quadriceps. The toe pointer will also help relax the calves so they may be stretched more easily.

Do not let your feet flare out to the sides when doing this stretch. A flared-out position of the lower legs and feet may cause overstretching of the inside (medial collateral) ligaments of the knee.



Most women will not feel much of a stretch in this position. But for tight people, especially men, this lets you know if you have tight ankles. If there is a strain, place your hands on the outside of your legs for support as you balance yourself slightly forward. Find a position you can hold for 20-30 seconds.

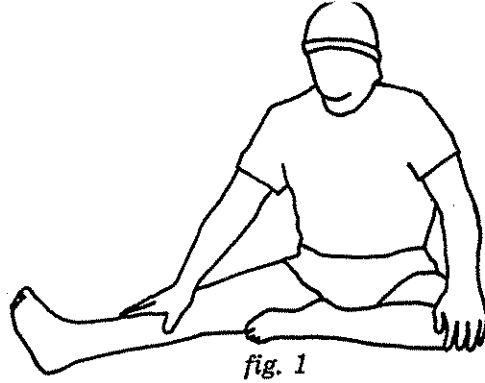


fig. 1

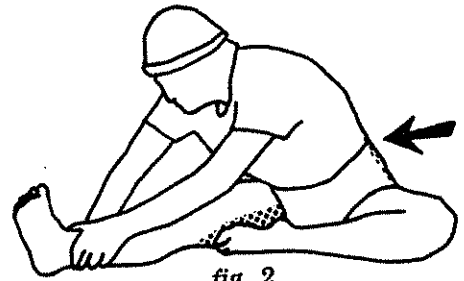
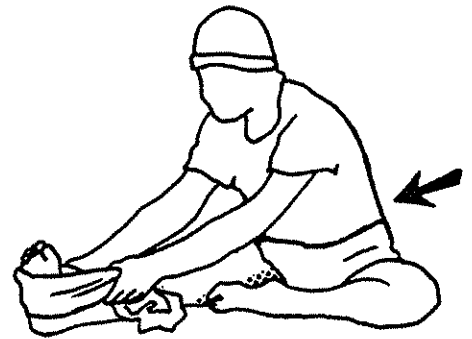
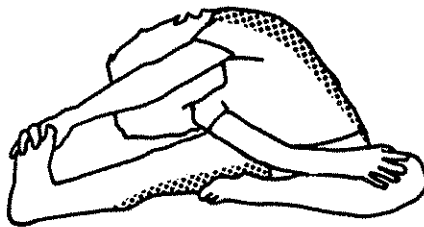


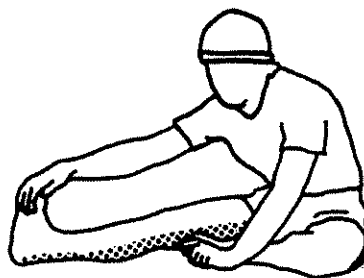
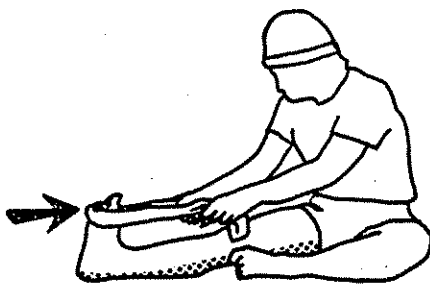
fig. 2

To stretch the hamstrings of the same leg that was bent (see previous page), straighten the right leg with the sole of your left foot slightly touching the inside of the right thigh. You are now in the straight-leg, bent-knee position (fig. 1). Slowly bend forward from the hips toward the foot of the straight leg (fig. 2) until you create the slightest feeling of stretch. Hold this for 20 seconds. After the stretch feeling has diminished, bend a bit more forward from the hips. Hold this developmental stretch for 25 seconds. Then switch sides and stretch the left leg in the same manner.

I have found that it is best to first stretch your quads, then the hamstrings of the same leg. It is easier to stretch the hamstrings after the quadriceps have been stretched.

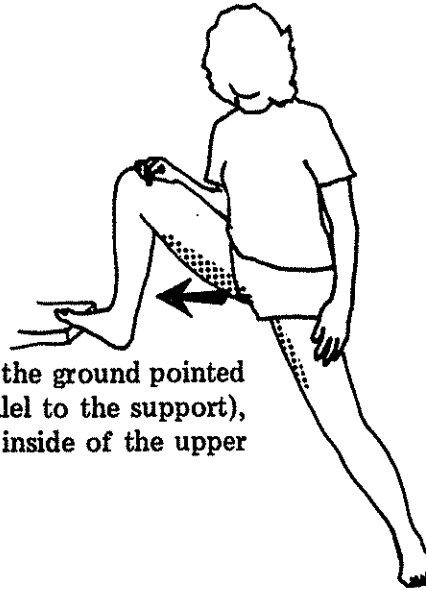
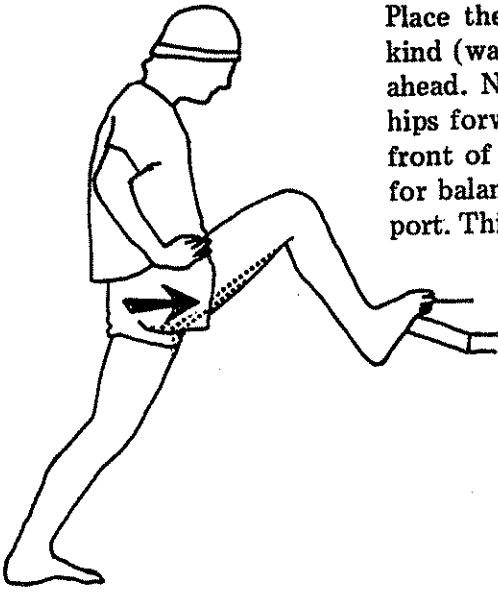


If you are especially flexible, you can increase the stretch along your sides with a variation of this position: with your right leg straight, reach over your head with your left arm and grab the outside of your right foot. As you bend, rest your right hand on your left knee. This is an excellent stretch for the hamstrings and the lateral portion of the upper body. It helps keep the waistline trim.

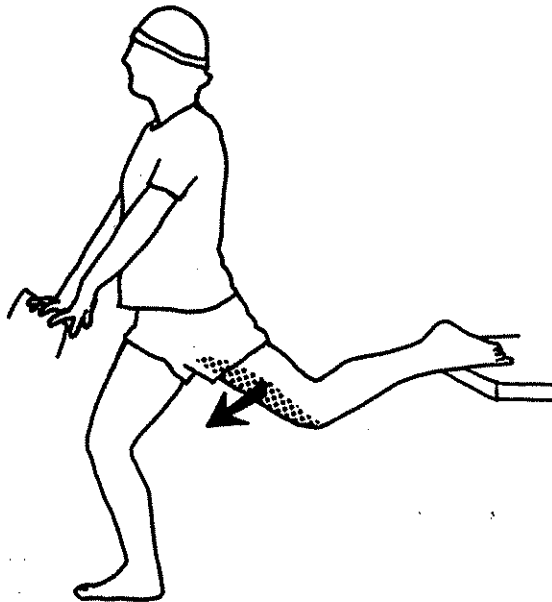
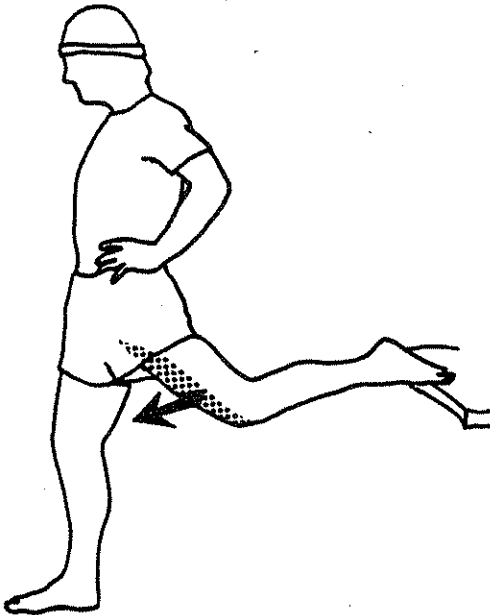


To stretch the back of the lower leg (calf and soleus muscles), either use a towel around the ball of your foot to pull your toes toward your knee, or if you are more flexible, use your hand to pull your toes toward your knee. Find an easy stretch and hold for 25 seconds. You may need to lean forward at the waist (from the hips) to increase the stretch.

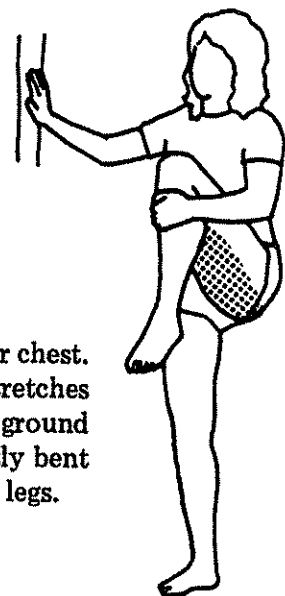
Place the ball of your foot up on a secure support of some kind (wall, fence, table). Keep the down leg pointed straight ahead. Now bend the knee of the up leg as you move your hips forward. This should stretch your groin, hamstrings, and front of hip. Hold for 30 seconds. Do both sides. If possible, for balance and control, use your hands to hold on to the support. This stretch will make it easier to lift your knees.



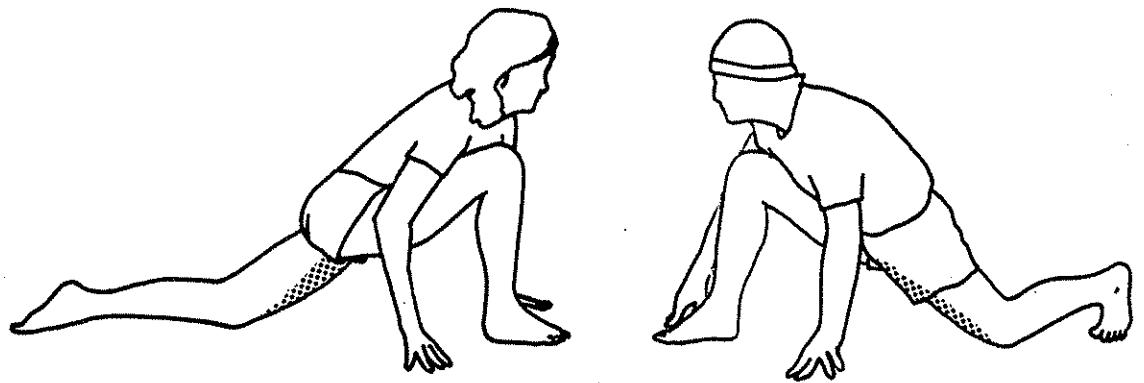
**Variation:** Instead of having the foot on the ground pointed straight ahead, turn it to the side (parallel to the support), then stretch as above. This stretches the inside of the upper legs. Hold for 25 seconds.



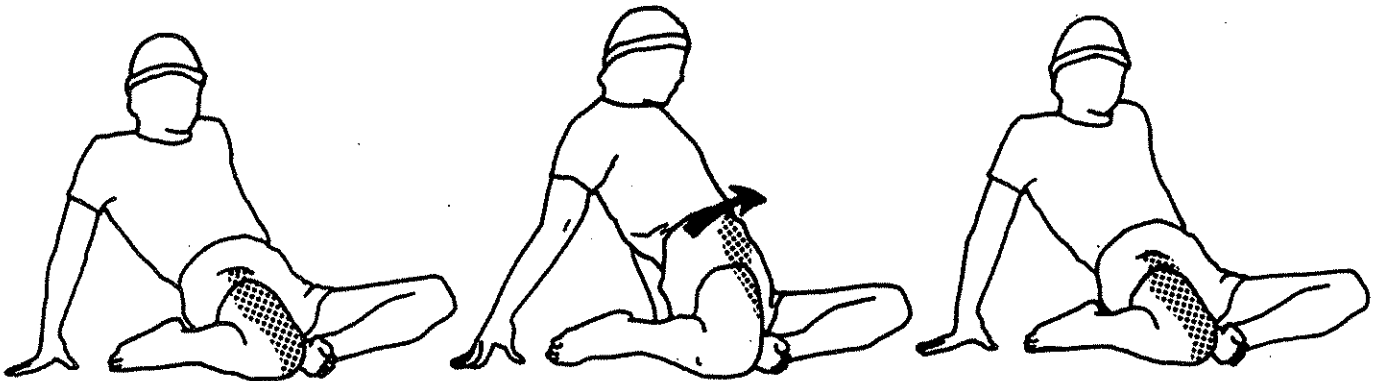
Extend your foot in back of you, setting the top of it on a table, fence or bar behind you at a comfortable height. Think of pulling your leg through (moving your leg forward) from the front of your hip to create a stretch for the front of the hip (*iliopsoas*) and quadriceps. Flex your butt (*gluteus*) muscles as you do this stretch. Keep the down knee slightly bent (1 inch) and upper body vertical. The foot on the ground should be pointed straight ahead. You can change the stretch by slightly bending the knee of the supporting leg a little more. Hold an easy stretch for 20 seconds. Learn to feel balanced and comfortable in this stretch through relaxed practice.



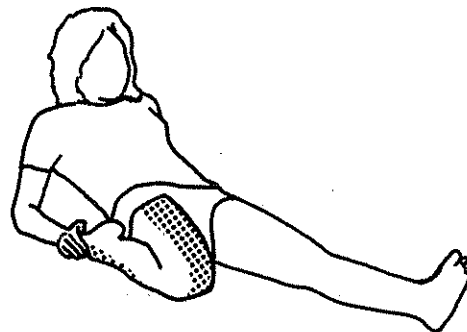
Hold on to something and pull your knee toward your chest. Do not lean forward at the waist or hips. This gently stretches your upper hamstrings, butt, and hips. The foot on the ground should be pointed straight ahead with the knee slightly bent (1 inch). Hold an easy stretch for 30 seconds. Do both legs.



To stretch the muscles in the front of the hip (*iliopsoas*), move one leg forward until the knee of the forward leg is directly over the ankle. Your other knee should be resting on the floor. Now, without changing the position of the knee on the floor or the forward foot, lower the front of your hip downward to create an easy stretch. Hold for 30 seconds. You should feel this stretch in the front of the hip and possibly in the hamstrings and groin. This is excellent for lower back problems.



After stretching your quads, practice tightening the buttocks on the side of the bent leg as you turn the hip over. This will help stretch the front of your hip and give a better overall stretch to upper thigh area. After contracting the butt muscles for 5-8 seconds, let the buttocks relax. Drop your hip down and continue to stretch the quad for another 15 seconds. Practice to eventually get both sides of the buttocks to touch the floor at the same time during the quad stretch. Now do other side.



Now, slowly lean *straight back* until you feel an easy stretch. Use your hands for balance and support. Hold this easy stretch for 30 seconds.