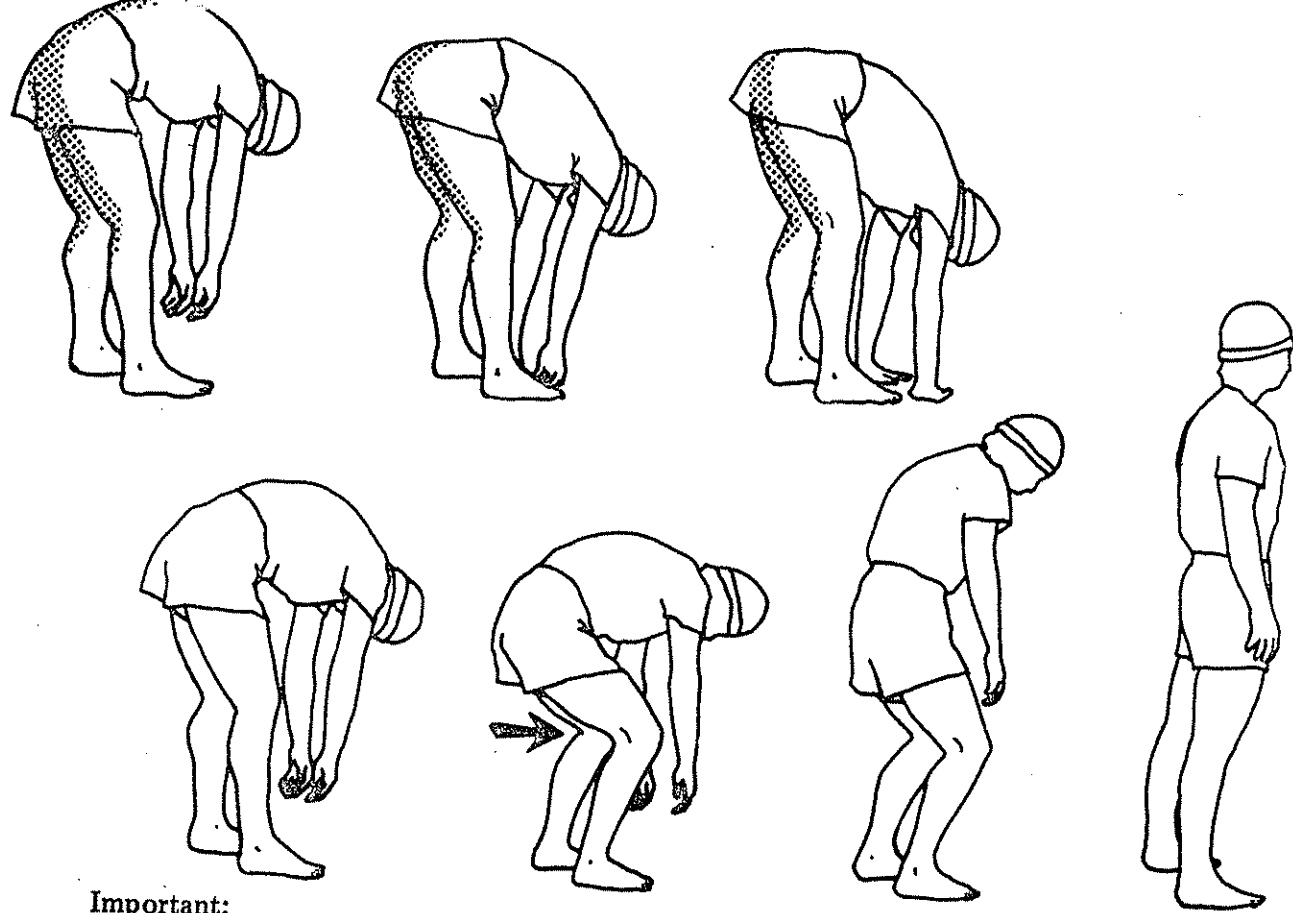


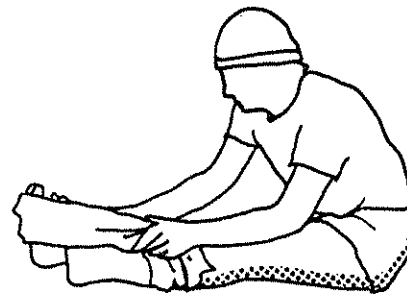
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Stretches for the Low Back



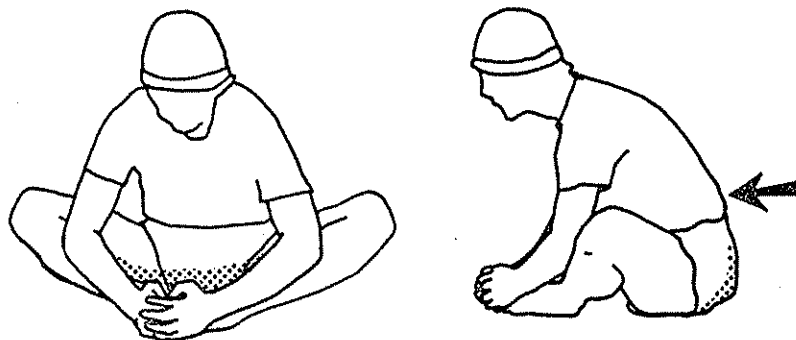
Important:

Any time you bend at the waist to stretch, remember to bend your knees

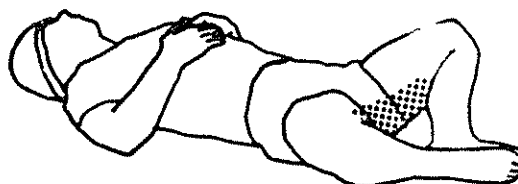


If you have trouble finding a place where you can stretch and relax, then use a towel to help. Place the towel around your feet, grab it by the ends and pull yourself forward from the hips to where you can relax and still get a stretch. Use straight arms to pull yourself forward. Work your way down the towel with your fingers, until the stretch feels right.

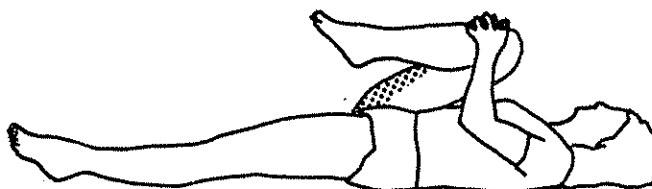
Be careful when you stretch with both legs in front of you or when bending forward at the hips in a standing position. You must not overstretch in these positions. Since the back of each leg probably differs in tightness and tension, stretching both legs at the same time should be avoided if you have lower back problems. When one or both legs are extremely tight, it is difficult to stretch both legs at the same time and get the correct stretch for each leg. It is easier on your back to stretch each leg separately.



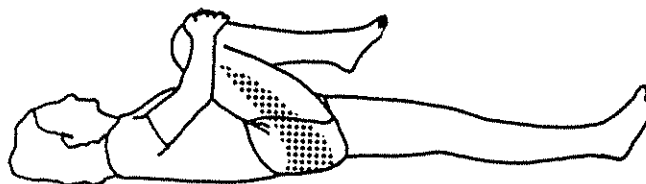
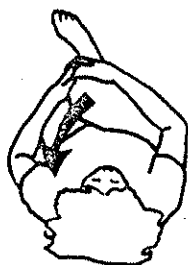
Put the soles of your feet together and hold onto your toes. Gently pull yourself forward, bending from the hips, until you feel a good stretch in your



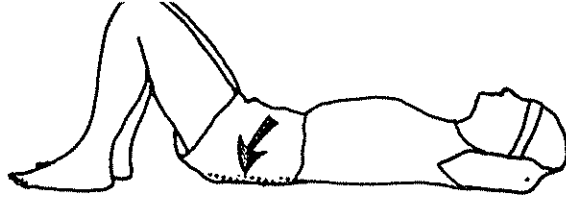
Relax, with knees bent and soles of your feet together. This comfortable position will stretch your groin. Hold for 30 seconds. Let the pull of gravity do the stretching.



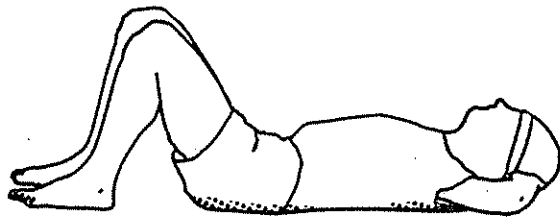
Pull your right leg toward your chest. For this stretch keep the back of your head on the floor or mat if possible, but don't strain. Hold an easy stretch for 30 seconds. Repeat, pulling your right leg toward your chest. Be sure to keep your lower back flat. If no real stretch is felt, don't worry. If the position feels good, use it. This is a very good position for the legs, feet, and back.



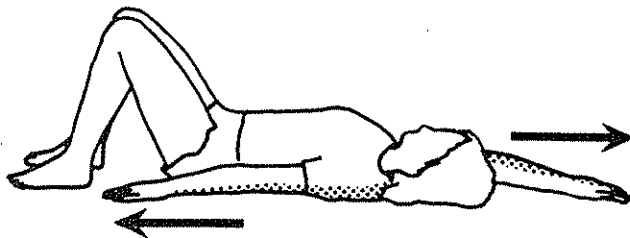
Variation: Pull your knee to your chest, then think of pulling the knee across your body toward your opposite shoulder to create a stretch on the outside of your right hip. Hold an easy stretch for 20 seconds. Do both sides.



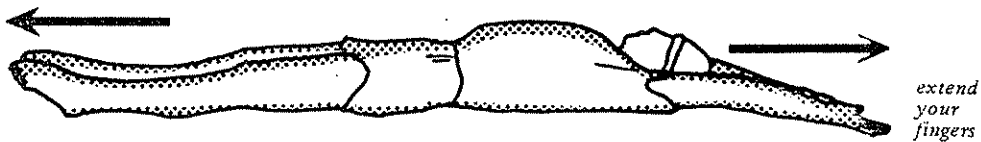
Lower Back Flattener: To relieve tension in lower back area, tighten your butt (*gluteus*) muscles and, at the same time, tighten your abdominal muscles to flatten your lower back. Hold this tension for 5-8 seconds, then relax. Repeat 2-3 times. Concentrate on maintaining constant muscle contraction. This pelvic tilting exercise will strengthen the butt and abdominal muscles so that you are able to sit and stand with good posture. Use these tension controls when sitting and standing.



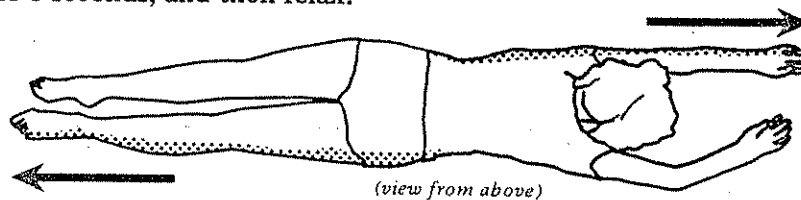
Shoulder Blade Pinch and Gluteus Tightener: Now, simultaneously do the shoulder blade pinch, flatten your lower back, and tighten your butt muscles. Hold 5 seconds, then relax and pull your head forward to stretch the back of your neck and upper back. Repeat 3-4 times. This feels real good.



From a bent knee position, with your head resting on the floor, put one arm above your head (palm up) and the other arm down along your side (palm down). Now reach in opposite directions at the same time to create a controlled stretch in your shoulders and back. Hold stretch for 6-8 seconds. Do both sides at least twice. Keep your lower back relaxed and flat.



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



Now stretch diagonally. Point the toes of your left foot as you extend your right arm. Stretch as far as is comfortable. Hold 5 seconds, then relax. Stretch the right leg and the left arm the same way. Hold each stretch for at least 5 seconds, then relax.