

# 30-Day Stretch Challenge



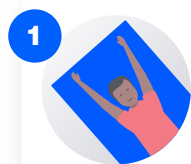
Tight hamstrings? Sore back? Stiff neck? Stretching can help! A regular stretch routine soothes muscle aches and loosens stiffness — and it can also give you a broader range of motion, keeping you nimble as you age.

When you're ready to start your challenge, your mission is simple: Aim to **stretch for at least 5 minutes** each day for 30 days in a row. Don't worry if you forget a day, just get into a stretching habit as many days as you can.

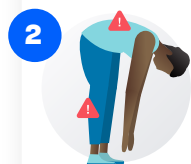
Let's get to it!



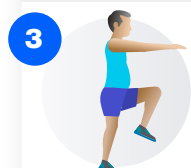
Check off all the days when you stretched for at least 5 minutes. Click the squares on the left side of each day, or print this out and fill them in by hand.



If you have any health issues or limitations, be sure to **check with your healthcare provider** before you increase your activity or try new exercises. Once you have their all-clear, or if you don't have any limitations, begin your stretching challenge with **gentle, floor-supported stretches** for your whole body.



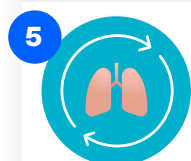
*Myth:* "Shouldn't I stretch until it hurts? No pain, no gain!" *Reality:* Pain is your body's way of telling you something is harmful. You should **avoid bouncing, and hold stretches until they feel slightly uncomfortable, but not to the point where they hurt**. Keep this in mind as you stretch today!



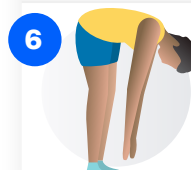
So *why* should you stretch more? Stretching **prevents injuries** when you exercise, keeping you free to be active. Many people find stretching to be a **good stress buster**. And stretching **keeps your body mobile**, which is important as we age! Remember this while you stretch today.



*Myth:* "Shouldn't I stretch before I work out?" *Reality:* Your muscles are most ready to stretch when they're warmed up. Think of it like a rubber band. If it's cold, it's tighter! So **build in a stretch routine after you exercise**.

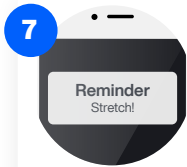


As you stretch today, remember to breathe through it. Don't hold your breath. In fact, you can use your breathing to help keep time! **Hold each stretch for a good 5-10 long breaths**.



Today, work on **touching your toes**. Stand straight, bend your knees slightly, and bend your torso down toward the floor, hinging at the hips. Don't worry if you can't touch your toes yet — just stretch as far as you can without pain. Hold that pose and feel that stretch!

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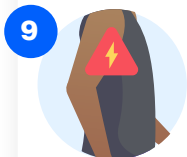
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Having trouble remembering to stretch each day? **Schedule a reminder** in your phone. Treat it like an important appointment you can't miss. Just 5 minutes of stretching can give you great benefits.



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If you struggle with a stiff lower back, you can try this easy, low-impact alternating stretch. Check out our [Cat Cow Pose video](#) and try it for yourself.



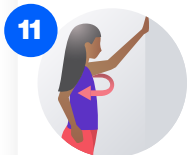
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**What causes muscle tightness** in the first place? Exercising hard, sitting for too long, and sleeping on an uncomfortable mattress can all lead to aches and stiffness. Stretching every day can help prevent those aches, and even alleviate them in the moment!



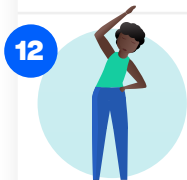
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Make it easier for yourself to stretch each day by **adding a stretch to your everyday routines**. Try a light side-to-side neck stretch in the shower, hold one ankle behind you and bend your knee to stretch your thigh while you brush your teeth with the other hand, etc.



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Mix things up today by stretching your **chest muscles**. Place your left palm flat on the corner of a wall, raise it just above head level, and gently pivot your hips to the right. You should feel a nice stretch right in your pectoral muscle.



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When we think about flexibility, we don't often think about the **sides of our torsos**. But stretching to the left or right can really open you up — and feels great! Stand straight up, feet shoulder-width apart, left hand on left hip. Stretch your right arm over your head to your left. Hold that pose for 5-10 breaths, then repeat on the other side.



13

Having trouble finding time to stretch? Try it right before bed. This [bedtime stretching routine](#) can help relax your body and prepare you for a great night's sleep.



14

How does stretching make you feel? Let's experiment with something. **Write down** how you feel — mentally and physically — before today's stretch session. Then go through your stretches, and afterward, write down how you feel. Your answers might surprise you!



15

You're halfway through the challenge! Great job. What's working for you so far? **Take note** of the tactics and stretches that have worked best for you, and keep building on them.

# 30-Day Stretch Challenge



16



If you're losing steam, **find a stretch buddy!** Going through this challenge with a friend, family member, or coworker can keep you motivated and help you stick to your goals.

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Avoid stiff muscles by **breaking up the time you spend sitting.** Try stretching while you watch your favorite shows, and if you work at a desk, take a stretch break for a couple minutes every hour.

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Stretch your back, shoulders, arms, and hamstrings all at once! The **Downward Dog Pose** is a yoga classic, and a powerful way to strengthen your upper body. Follow along with our [video here!](#)

19



Here's a fun one: **Stretch your calves** today. Place the ball of your foot against a wall with your heel on the floor. Keep your other foot sturdy on the ground behind you. Straighten that front leg and slowly lean forward until you feel a stretch in your calf muscle. Then repeat with the other leg.

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Don't wait till you're stiff and sore to stretch. **Keep stretching even on days when you feel loose and lively.** That can prevent stiffness from building up — and help you keep up your new habit.

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Ready to take it to the next level? Stretching with **exercise bands** can help your joints open even further. Think about buying some different size bands for different stretches, and start light!

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**Frog Pose** is an amazing hip opener! Get on your hands and knees, with your knees out to the sides past your hips. Spread them out until you feel a good stretch, but without pain.

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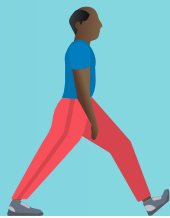
If you notice you have constantly tight hips or a sore back, **take a look at your chairs.** Consider replacing them with something that promotes better posture, or just adding an ergonomic pillow for more support.

24



**Active stretching** means you're just using your muscles to stretch (like lifting your arms above your head to stretch your back), while passive stretching uses an outside force (like holding a wall to stretch your chest). Both types of stretches are helpful! Try out both types today!

# 30-Day Stretch Challenge



25



Did you know you can stretch your **forearm muscles**? Hold your right arm straight out, palm up, and bend your hand downward at the wrist so your right palm is facing out in front of you. Use your left hand to grip those right fingers, gently pulling down and back. You should feel a stretch in your forearm between your wrist and your elbow. Repeat on the other side.

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Some people find they're able to stretch further if their body is warm, like after a hot bath or a sauna. But it's easy to get overeager and stretch too far. If your body temperature is warmer than usual, **be sure not to stretch too far**.

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Pro tip: **Start by stretching the larger muscle groups first**, like your back, legs, the front of your torso, etc. After that, stretch the smaller, more specific muscle groups, like your biceps, neck muscles, calves, and so on.

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Don't neglect those hard-to-reach areas. Stretch the backs of your **shoulder blades** by holding a sturdy pole or pillar with both hands. Keep your feet firm on the ground, then slowly lean back, curving your spine outward behind you while holding that post.

29



Almost there! Stretch to the finish line with another 5-minute stretch break today. Then make a plan to **reward yourself** for making it through this challenge! Healthy rewards could include some new fitness gear, a soothing bubble bath, a new movie — anything that feels joyous and in line with your health goals.

30



You've made it to the end of the challenge. Congratulations! **Keep a list** of which tactics worked for you and got you stretching. Repeat them to stretch further, stay flexible, and widen your range of motion even more!

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