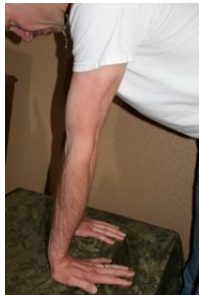


Upper Body Stretches

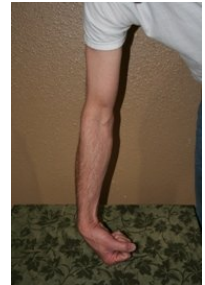
Muscle Stretching Basics: Our muscles will contract for up to a full minute to keep us from stretching into a tear. Due to this protective mechanism, stretching for a full TWO minutes, will allow the muscle and tissue around it to actually stretch. Go into and come out of a stretch very slowly, to allow the muscle to open up. When you first start these stretches, they may feel uncomfortable at the ends of the muscle immediately coming out of the stretch, so give the muscles a moment to open up after the stretch. Never stretch your muscle beyond your comfortable range. It will open up more over time, even when only gentle stretching is used. Warm muscles stretch more effectively and comfortably.

Stretches for Upper Body Tension:



← Arm Flexor Stretch: Turn fingers toward your body and press the wrists forward and down to a table top comfortably. The stretch will normally be felt along the insides of the arms.

→ Arm Extensor Stretch: Keeping elbow straight, turn fingers in, so fingertips are touching your palm. Place top of knuckles/hand onto table top. The further the top of your hand lies on the table, the greater the stretch on the top of your arm. Important: keep fingertips touching the palm, or the stretch will not be as effective.



← Pectoralis (chest muscle) Major Stretch: Sometimes called the 'door stretch', this helps to alleviate pressure on the upper back, mid-back and neck. Rest forearm on corner of a wall or door jam. Turn your upper body away from that arm, toward opposite side, to stretch the big chest muscle, just below your collar bone.

→ Pectoralis Major, Pectoralis Minor and Biceps Stretch: Hold arm and hand flat against the wall, up to the shoulder. Turn upper body away from the wall. Stretch will normally be felt in the upper chest and arm, but occasionally will also be felt in the lower part of the arm, if the connective tissue throughout the arm is particularly tight.



← Stretching the Axillary (Armpit) Muscles: For this stretch, a pull up bar or monkey bars at the park are ideal. Hold, and supporting your body weight at first, begin to hang your body weight with your arms fully extended. This stretch is really intense for MOST people. We rarely open up our shoulders this way, and there is significant restriction over time with most daily activities we all participate in.

Neck Stretches: Stretching your neck gently side to side, and allowing it to fall back while sitting or standing, will help to loosen tight neck muscles.