

## My 10 Minute Pre-Exercise Stretches

Starting from my head down to my toes, I stretch to remain flexible, warm-up and loosen muscles to reduce the chance of getting pulled muscles and cramping during exercises, and to improve blood circulation and nerve conduction. (Talk to your doctor before starting any of these stretches). Below is my morning routine:

**Face** – I stretch my facial muscles as far as I can in all directions by exaggerating facial expressions while saying the letters: A – E – I (mouth open wide) – O and U (pucker lips). *This helps with the elasticity of the skin.*

**Neck** – I turn my head in ten different positions for 10 seconds each way: Tilt head forward (chin down), then head backward (chin up), then looking straight ahead, tilt head to right shoulder then to left, then turn head to right (chin over right shoulder) then to left, then tilt head down to the right (chin toward right arm pit) then look up to the left, then chin to left armpit and finally to upper right. *This helps neck circulation and flexibility – relieves stress.*

**Shoulders** – With arms hanging down by your side, roll shoulders forward and up to back and down five times then reverse the direction for five times. Next with Right hand, pull Left elbow toward Right shoulder for 10 seconds, then Right elbow toward Left shoulder with Left hand. Then with Right hand pull Left wrist over and behind the head toward Right shoulder for 10 seconds, then pull the Right wrist toward Left shoulder with Left hand behind the head. Next clasp hands high above head, keeping arms straight, and push hands down behind your back. Then clasp hands behind lower back and push hands up toward upper back with arms straight. *This helps relieve shoulder pain.*

**Biceps & Triceps** – Do curls without weights: With your elbows by your side, put right palm (facing down) on top of left palm (facing up) and push down with right hand from chest to lower stomach (while left arm keeps strong resistance with constant upward force) then pull up with left hand back up to chest (with right arm pushing down). Do this 10 times then switch hand position and repeat. *This strengthens your biceps and triceps.*

**Forearms** – While seated, keeping Right arm straight with palm down and over Right knee, twist top of hand to Left pushing the thumb down and continue twisting hand as far as possible. Now put the thumb of the Left hand on the palm of the Right hand with palm of the Left hand on the back of the Right hand and keep twisting wrist until the Right palm is up (or as close to up as possible). Do this for 10 seconds then switch hands. NEXT with the Right arm straight and palm up and over Right knee, grab the palm of the Right hand with the inside of all the fingers on the Left hand with Left palm on back of Right hand and Left thumb on back of Right fingers and keep turning right wrist as far as you can until Right thumb points down as much as possible. Do this for 10 seconds then switch hands. *This has helped relieve my carpal tunnel symptoms. So repeat as needed for symptoms.*

**Fingers** – With elbows pointing away from your body to the side, clasp fingers on each hand together in front of your chest. Do this by keeping fingers together and curled as holding a small glass in each hand without your thumbs. Now with the palm of the right hand facing you (thumb up) and of the left hand facing away from you (thumb down), clasp the curled fingers of each hand together and push your elbow away from each other 10 times then switch hand position and repeat. *This strengthens your grip.*

On both hands, touch tips of all four fingers to the inside edge of your thumb to make the shape of an “O”. Now place the entire nail of all five fingers of each hand on your upper leg next to your knee (Right hand near Right Knee and Left near Left). Then push hands down toward leg while slowly pulling fingers apart from each other, stretching the outer muscles on each finger. *This counters the grasping and pushing down motion we do all day.*

**Lower Back** – While standing with legs straight, twist shoulders far to the right then to the left, then lean far forward, far back and to the left and to the right. Then while sitting on the edge of a seat with feet flat on the floor, cross your Right foot over your Left thigh and while keeping your back straight and not twisted, pull your Right knee toward your Left shoulder with both hands for 20 seconds. Then switch to Left foot crossed over Right thigh & pull Left knee toward Right shoulder for 20 seconds. (Repeat each leg for 2 more times.) *This has helped relieve my back pain.*

**Thighs** – With your back flat against a wall, squat down so that thighs are parallel to the floor and shins are parallel to the wall (like sitting in a chair but without a chair). Hold this position for up to 20 seconds. *This strengthens thighs.*

**Calf** – Standing up and facing a wall, put both hands on the wall at about shoulder height. Step back with the Right foot, keep Right leg straight with knee locked back. Then lean forward, stretching your Right calf for 10 seconds. Then switch to Left foot back, stretching Left calf. *This helps reduce leg cramps when walk or run.*

**Shin/Knee/Top of foot** – While standing lift both heels high off floor to stand on balls of feet 10 times. Then face a wall standing up, put both hands on the wall at about shoulder height, with Left foot flat on floor, step back with Right foot turning foot over so toes are pointing backward and top of all toes and foot are on the floor. Now press the top of the foot down into the floor for 10 seconds, then switch to Left foot. *This has helped relieve my knee pain.*

**Toes** – Place bottom of right foot on top of toes of left foot and push toes on left foot up for 10 seconds then switch feet and repeat. *This counters the pushing down motion we do all day as we walk.*