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## **Stretches and exercises for the hips and back**

Much of our tension is stored initially in the connective tissue (beneath the skin, around the muscles and around the organs) and then moves on to the ligaments, tendons and only at the last stage does it impact on the joints themselves.

By the time a joint is affected then the tension (whatever its source) has been long standing.

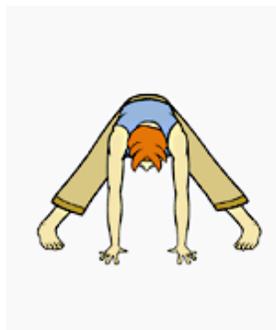
So we need to keep this connective tissue as fluid as possible, to allow the tension to flow away. If not then small protein fibres build up which then bind together stopping free flow of the all important fluids. These fluids bathe the cells and allow free flow of fuel (glucose and oxygen) into the cells and toxins (lactic acid, uric acid) to be removed. Stretching literally unbinds these protein fibres and allows the stretch sensors in the muscles to reset to zero again.

### **1. Wide forward bend.**

This is not simply touching your toes but is a focused and slow stretch all the way down the back and sides of the legs and also down the back. It is important that you do not do this stretch too quickly.

- Stand with legs more than hip width apart
- Place your hands on your knees or higher if this is more comfortable.
- Drop your head and feel the resulting stretch.
- Gradually take your hands further down your legs in stages, feeling the stronger stretch as you go.
- You may be able get your fingers or hands onto the floor; if so gently lean forwards and then backwards to increase the stretch.
- Carefully return to a standing position gradually moving your hands up the legs again and stretch upwards with your hands above your head.

Repeat three times



## 2. The doggy posture

This is a great stretch for the back of the legs, especially the knees – we do not often get a chance to stretch here during the day

- Kneel on all fours
- Lift your bottom up into the air as high as you can and straighten legs
- Press your heels towards the ground gently as first and then with more pressure.
- Press just one heel and then the other to get a stronger stretch in each leg then both together.
- Return to a kneeling position

Repeat three times



## 3. Seated forward stretch

By this time the back of your legs and the back itself will be softer and you will be more likely to be able to touch your toes in this more challenging position.

- Sit down on the floor with legs outstretched in front of you
- Stretch your arms up towards the ceiling as far as you can feeling that nice stretch in your back. The 'L' shape.
- Keeping this stretched 'L' shape feeling gradually move your arms forward towards your feet; try to keep your back straight.
- Hold whichever part of your leg which you can reach and stretch your back, bending the elbows to increase the stretch.
- Drop the elbows and sit up again
- Repeat 3 times gradually moving down the legs further if you can each time
- Finally, gently return to sitting position and stretch up to the ceiling

When you have finished these stretches lie down on the floor to relax and allow the body to process everything for 5 minutes if possible.

