

# 10 Great Neck + Back Stretches

YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT





# The Best Stretches You Don't Already Know: 10 Great Neck & Upper Back Stretches

Neck and upper back pain affect nearly everyone – from high-performance athletes to individuals working in an office setting. Unfortunately, this type of pain knows no bounds; it can stem from overuse, repetitive movements (or lack thereof) and even something as simple as a single night's poor sleeping position!

So, how do you combat this type of problem? Stretching! (And, of course, strengthening the muscles in your neck and upper back doesn't hurt, either!) Stretching helps to deliver relief so effectively because it increases blood flow to the muscles, improves range of movement and relieves muscle stiffness!

Most stretches are pretty well known – there are hundreds of variations of turning your head to the side or pulling your shoulders back to stretch your upper back. And while these are effective, you may want to switch it up to target different parts of those particular muscles.

So, here are 10 lesser-known stretches (5 that target your back and 5 for your neck) that you've probably never tried before.

**Note:** \*When stretching, you should feel the muscle expanding. If the stretch causes pain or discomfort of any kind, STOP the exercise immediately to prevent injury. These stretches provide general relief of neck and upper back pain and should not be a replacement for professional treatment of injuries.

# 5 Unique Neck Stretches

## 1. Neck Position Strengthening

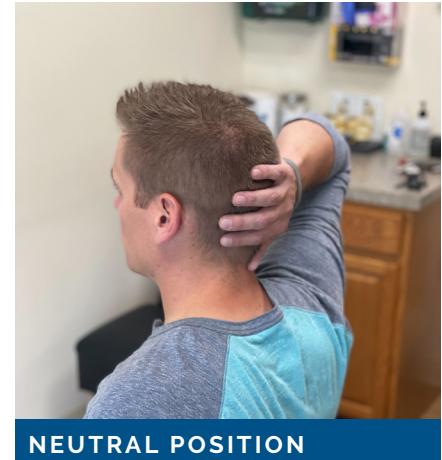
First, let's strengthen your neck muscles. Use this same technique to work out muscles all around your neck.

### NEUTRAL POSITION

Place your hand on the back of your head, positioning your fingers at the top of your neck. Push your head backward towards your fingers. Your fingers should provide slight pressure – not move your head forward but prevent it from moving backward. You should feel this on muscles down the back of your neck.

Hold this position for approximately six seconds. Repeat five to ten times. provide slight pressure – not move your head forward but prevent it from moving backward. You should feel this on muscles down the back of your neck.

Hold this position for approximately six seconds. Repeat five to ten times.



NEUTRAL POSITION

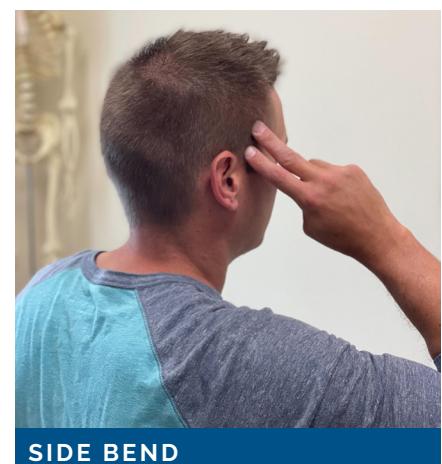


FORWARD BEND

### FORWARD BEND

Use the same technique to work the front of your neck. This time, place your fingers on your forehead. While you press your head forward towards the ground, your fingers should apply enough pressure to prohibit movement. This stretch can be felt on the front and sides of your neck.

Hold this position for approximately six seconds. Repeat five to ten times.



SIDE BEND

### SIDE BEND

Now, target each side of the neck with the same exercise. Place two fingers on your temple (the same side of your head as the arm you're using). Bend your head to the side but use enough pressure from your hand to prevent movement.

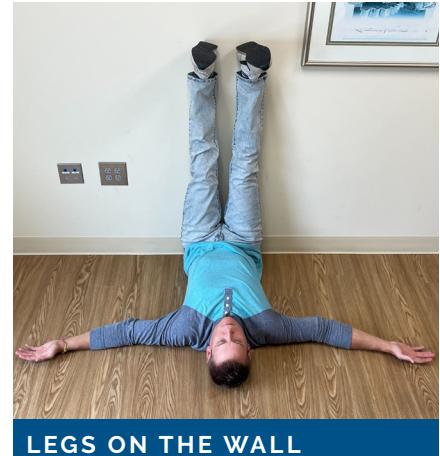
Hold this position for approximately six seconds. Repeat five to ten times. Switch to the other side and repeat.

## 2. Legs on the Wall

Some moves provide stretch and relaxation without even moving your neck! This particular move relieves shoulder tension, improves circulation, and eases the pressure on your neck and back.

First, find a wall clear of paintings or other obstructions. Carefully sit close to the wall and lay down perpendicular to the wall. Scoot forward so that your sit bones are close to the wall, and while laying down, raise your legs so that they're flat against the wall. Keep your hips and back flat on the floor. Breath deeply and allow your shoulders and neck to relax. Lay your arms on the ground out to the side, palms up. If you feel comfortable, lean your head and neck away from the wall for a deeper stretch.

Rest in this position for up to ten minutes. Get up slowly and cautiously to avoid aggravating the lower back.

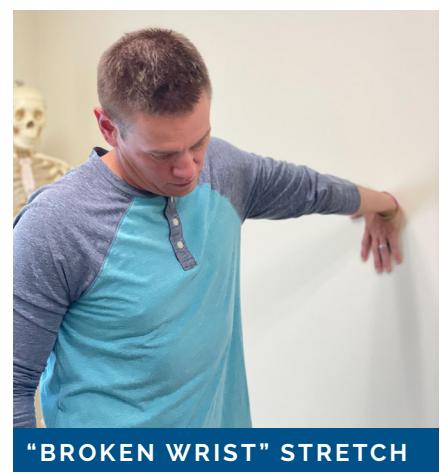
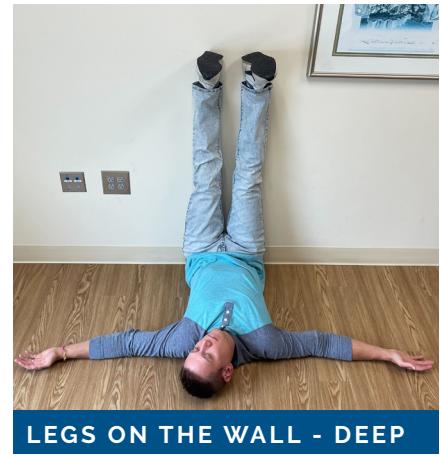


## 3. "Broken Wrist" Stretch

The "median nerve" is the main nerve in the forearm. This exercise stretches your forearm while providing a deep stretch to the side of your neck.

Stand an arm's length from a wall. Place your hand flat on the wall with your fingers pointing toward the ground. Your arm should remain as straight as possible. This position will stretch the muscle in your forearm (which also helps prevent or relieve carpal tunnel).

To stretch your neck in this position, slowly lean your head to the opposite side of the stretched-out hand and bend toward the front of your body. Hold this position for three seconds and repeat ten times. Repeat the same steps with the opposite arm.



## 5 Unique Neck Stretches

### 4. Right Angle Shoulder Stretch

If you have played any sport throughout your life, you probably know the stretch where you cross your arm across your chest and pull with your other arm. This common stretch targets your triceps, but you can adjust this stretch slightly to stretch your shoulder blades and relieve neck pain.

Hold your arm out in front of you with your elbow at a 90 degree angle. Your forearm should be parallel to the ground as well as your chest. With your other arm, reach underneath to grab your first arm's elbow. Gently pull the elbow straight across your chest toward your other shoulder. Hold this position for about 30 seconds or until you feel the tightness begin to relax. Switch arms and repeat.

This stretch targets your shoulder muscles, ultimately releasing tension in your neck.

### 5. Gravity Stretch

A good stretch doesn't have to require a lot of effort. Simply laying in a useful position will properly stretch your neck muscles without risking strain.

#### Towel Stretch

For this stretch, all you need is a bath towel or a small blanket. Roll the towel and place it at the base of your neck. Lay on your back with the towel under your neck. Your legs can either be extended or bent at the knees, whichever is more comfortable. To feel a deeper stretch, tuck your chin in or elongate your neck back for three seconds at a time. You should feel this at the base of your skull.

Rest in this position for up to ten minutes.

#### Cliff Stretch

Lay flat on your stomach on a firm surface with an edge, such as a table, bed, or bench. Move up so that your shoulders are at the edge of the surface. Gently let your head hang over the edge. This position will stretch the muscles through the back of your neck.

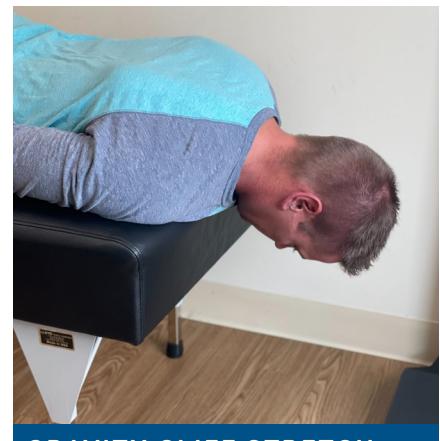
Stay in this position for about ten seconds. Remaining in this position for too long will cause lightheadedness. Repeat the stretch three to five times — unless you feel any discomfort in your head or neck areas. If you begin to feel lightheaded, stop the exercise.



RIGHT ANGLE SHOULDER



GRAVITY TOWEL STRETCH



GRAVITY CLIFF STRETCH

# 5 Lesser Known Upper Back Stretches

## 1. The Robot

Active stretching is a great way to activate your muscles. For this exercise, stand with your back straight against the wall and relax your shoulders. Both your arms should be laying flat against the wall – slowly slide them up the wall to form a 90 degree bend at your elbow. Forearms should be parallel to each other with your fingers pointing away down the wall.

Next, lift your right forearm so that the back of your hand touches the wall, all without moving your elbows. At the same time, your left forearm should be down so that your palm is touching the wall.

Move both arms back to the base position. Then switch which arm positions, either moving up or down. All this time, maintain a right angle on your elbows. Repeat these motions for 30 seconds. You should feel this exercise in your shoulders and upper back.

## 2. Wall Stretch

Your back goes through loads of stress throughout your day. Even sitting in a desk chair all day can cause chronic back pain. When back pain arises, you can use a wall to stretch out and relieve some of that tension.

### Classic Wall Stretch

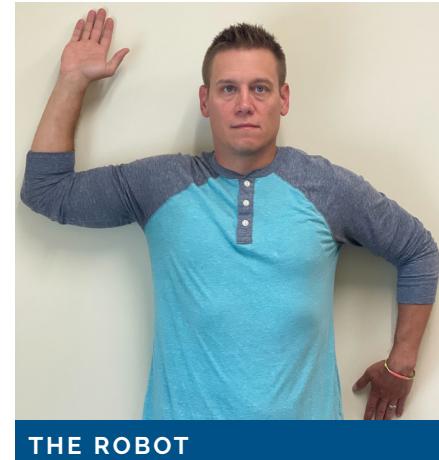
Find a wall with no paintings or other obstructions. Stand facing the wall and place both hands flat on the wall at shoulder height with fingers pointing towards the ceiling. Without removing your hands, take a few steps back from the wall until your arms are straight and no longer bent. Hinge yourself forward by bending at the hips and not moving your hands or feet. Do not push on the wall or slide your hands further up the wall. Avoid tensing your shoulders and neck. You should feel this stretch in your shoulders and upper back.

Hold this position for about 30 seconds.

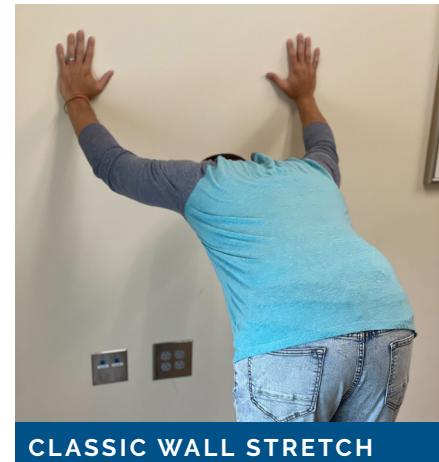
### "V" Wall Stretch

Face the wall and place your hands behind your head. . Touch your elbows to the wall. Without moving your feet, allow your back to bend as you push your stomach against the wall and slide your elbows up. You should feel this stretch across your upper back.

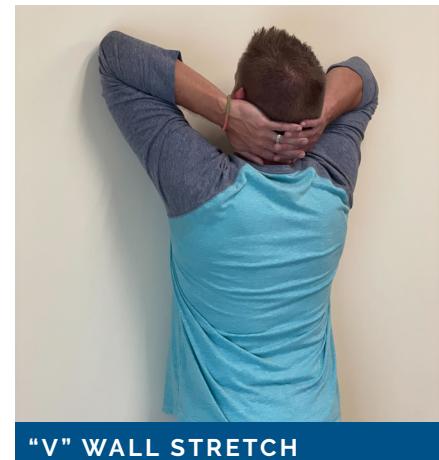
You can either hold this position for 30 seconds or complete ten reps.



THE ROBOT



CLASSIC WALL STRETCH



"V" WALL STRETCH

## 5 Lesser Known Upper Back Stretches

### 3. Chair Stretch

To do this stretch, all you need is a stable chair. Sit forward on the edge of the chair with your feet firmly and flat on the ground. Gently bend forward and cross your arms as you grab the front of the chair (or underneath). Tuck your chin in and arch your upper back. Gently pull your arms to feel a deeper stretch. You should feel this stretch in your mid to upper back.

Hold the position for 20 to 30 seconds.



CHAIR STRETCH

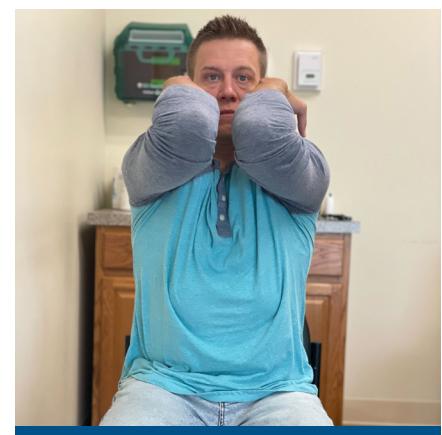
### 4. The Butterfly

You can do this stretch either sitting or standing. With your back straight, raise your hands and touch your fingertips to the shoulder of the same arm. Your elbows should point to the side. Exhale as you move both elbows in toward each other until they touch (or are as close as possible). Inhale as you move your arms back to the starting position.

Repeat ten times, keeping your spine straight the entire time.



THE BUTTERFLY - STEP 1



THE BUTTERFLY - STEP 2

### 5. Side Twist (Laying Down)

Find a comfortable surface to lay on and a pillow to support your head. Lay on your side with your head on the pillow. Bring your knees up to form a 90 degree angle; this ensures your upper back is stretched instead of the lower area. With the arm opposite the side you are laying on, put your hand on your hip. Gently twist your body to the opposite side. Look toward the side you are moving to instead of keeping your head static.

Hold this position for about ten seconds before going back to the first position. For a deeper stretch, reach your arm straight out instead of resting on the hip. Repeat this motion about three to five times



### BONUS: Glute Stretch

Did you know that back pain can stem from a knot or tightness in your glutes and hips? To stretch this muscle, simply lay on your back with your knees bent at a comfortable angle. Lift one leg and place it over the other so that your ankle is resting on your opposite knee. With the same side arm as the bent leg, gently push your bent knee away from you. You should feel this stretch in your glute muscle and hip.

Hold this stretch for about 30 seconds and repeat with the other leg.



# Say Goodbye to Neck and Back Pain

While there are endless benefits to stretching, it can't always eliminate stubborn, chronic pain on its own. [Chiropractic care](#) is a medication- and surgery-free treatment that naturally heals the injury or cause of pain. To learn more about how you can benefit from chiropractic treatments or to schedule an appointment, contact [Meridian HealthCare!](#)