

4.10 Stretching

Find opportunities in your day for a quick stretch.

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During the day, especially right after we awaken, many of us feel sluggish and sleepy. This effect can be compounded by poor sleep, injuries, and general stiffness or soreness. It's tempting to reach for a mug of coffee to provide a quick hit of energy, but stretching can also be an effective method of energizing ourselves whenever we start to sag.

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- Keeps your body flexible.
- Helps you feel more youthful.
- Supports joint and ligament health.

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- Performing stretches incorrectly can lead to discomfort, injury, or lack of desired results.

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Habits usually stick most easily when we attach them to other habits, so try to find something in your daily routine that triggers you to remember to stretch. This can be waking up, reaching your lunch break, or anything else that serves as a reminder.

If you have a dog or a cat, you'll see that they naturally stretch when they awaken and throughout the day, so it's clearly a natural tendency to elongate our limbs and breathe deeply. You don't need a lot of training to stretch—you can just raise your arms over your head, make a few arm circles, and touch your toes.

For a slightly more advanced routine, however, you can find dozens of videos on the web that provide inspiration and guidance. You may wish to allocate a specific amount of time, such as two, five, or ten minutes, and follow along with a favorite creator.

Whatever you choose, be gentle with yourself, particularly right after waking. The goal is to loosen up your body, get your blood flowing, and ease yourself into the day, not to perform complex yoga poses. Resist the inclination to do too much too fast, and check what feels right for you.
