

SELF MASSAGE AND STRETCHING

A Series of Articles
from
HeadLines

*by Shari Aizenman
Atlanta, GA*

HeadLines newsletter was started in 1996, using original articles, tips on health care, and sharing of everyday living experiences to aid the laryngectomee. The articles ranged from physical care to emotional support and were written for and by patients and caregivers. In 1997 we added medical professionals and the current list of contributors contains a great mix of patients, caregivers, doctors, speech pathologists and other professionals.

The mail-out edition is printed and distributed each month by the Mid-South Division of American Cancer Society and it is now distributed worldwide. It is published monthly on WebWhispers, WWHealthHelp, and Larynx-C listservs and is featured on the following Internet sites.

Previous issues of HeadLines since 1996 may be found at the following site
<http://www.webwhispers.org/pages/Headlines/HIndex.htm>

This site in the UK has HeadLines since 1997
<http://www.laryngectomees.inuk.com/headlines.htm>

The IAL site also carries the previous two years.
<http://larynxlink.com/Main/newslett.htm>

Pat Sanders, Editor, pat@choralmusic.com

Layout by Leonard Librizzi

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INTRODUCTION

As a holistic health care practitioner for nearly eighteen years, I have a reputation for preaching, kind of. I have seen hundreds of clients with every variety of physical situations you can imagine. Each of them has left my office with instructions on self massage and stretching.

It has been a pleasure to write this series of articles that anyone can use, but is specifically designed for laryngectomees. There are inherent difficulties that are apparent when considering treatment and post-operative care for someone who has had a surgical procedure. Those who have had invasive procedures on the front of their necks are indeed unique.

Not only are there the obvious scars involved, the underlying tissues and their changes, but the changes in lifestyle, use of the Servox and dominant new "speaking hand" and the arm attached to it, but also the after effects of radiation, the change in diet, and a lifelong awareness of the physical, emotional and spiritual being as a cancer survivor.

The Right Touch and The Right Stretch series address the need for self-care for those who are ready to take charge of their wellness and get in touch with a sense of feeling better and becoming more aware and honest with their bodies.

The series are user-friendly self-care guides that use handy tools and incorporate breath and yoga postures to bring the body as a whole into a more flexible and cared-for space. When we address our core needs for touch, it affects the rest of our life

positively. We are more clear-headed when our body is not in discomfort.

A note on scar tissue and surgery is needed to understand the need for continuous stretching. Scar tissue is not organized the same as normal tissue. You must understand that the body has a cellular organization that allows for flexibility and ease of motion. Scar tissue seeks to stabilize, and does not consider flexibility when forming. The use of massage and stretches can make scar tissue more flexible. More flexible equals more movement equals less binding equals more freedom and so on.

A note on your general health care is necessary. Understand that having a variety of partners in your wellness program will allow you new found freedom in your overall well-being. Your physician, maybe a physical therapist, massage therapist, yoga instructor or exercise teacher—all of us are available resources for improving the quality of your life.

Someone once shared with me a lovely poem that I remember always:

*Do remember to forget
Anger, worry and regret.
Live while you have life to live.
Love while you have love to give.*

Thanks for allowing me to be a partner in your wellness program. If you have questions or comments regarding this series of articles, feel free to E-mail me at:

bodyworksatlanta@gmail.com



THE RIGHT TOUCH

First in a Series on Stretching and Self-Massage

Touch has always been paramount in the history of being on earth. I am sure that the dinosaurs had a way of nurturing their young. Research shows that primates would rather live without food than without touch. Being a massage therapist, a primary and secondary caregiver to hundreds of willing participants, I have done my own bit of "research". The results: touch is just plain good for you. It is necessary to the growth and survival of the body, mind and spirit.

Many of us have grown up in an environment where touch was not a part of nurturing. How many times in your life have you comforted another in need by placing a hand on a shoulder, touching another person's hand? A simple hug, well-meant, can help a person in grief or fear. Providing touch to one's self is the ultimate act of self-love. Showing yourself that you care enough to touch is nurturing to every cell in your being and you will learn how different you can feel.

Having been a massage therapist for fifteen years has been a gift for me. I have touched so many different types of people with totally different needs.

Eight years ago, a special person, Pat, was reintroduced to me. I had met her originally at a time when she and my father dated, many years before, and now her son, a client of mine, recommended that his mother come in as she had been diagnosed with and treated for breast cancer. So we met again and our journey in healing began. During that first year, we touched our way through a second cancer that resulted in her laryngectomy. The next path was before us, and we

have walked together on this journey. Massage has been an important part of Pat's healing, an education in self-care. I will share some of the basics of touch and stretching that have worked for Pat and hopefully will for you as well.

Recognize your tools, as they are many and varied. When we think of massage, we always think of the hands as our tools, but as we age, sometimes arthritis and other maladies may hinder our ability to use our hands to massage. There are many massage tools available on the market, as well as some you may have in your home. Do your research to find the right tools for you. In this massage session, the hands are your tools.

Remember the basics of massage. Do not massage swollen, bruised, or open skin. You may want to ask your physician if there is any reason why you should not be doing self-massage.



The right touch. Give your hands a little stretch. Stretching your hands in preparation is important. Lengthen your arm to lock your elbow and gently pull back on each of your fingers, including your thumb. Then bend each finger, then hand toward the palm. Shake your hands, bend each at the wrist and spread your fingers as wide as possible. Repeat this process. You are ready!! Remember to take breaks as often as needed so your hands don't tire.

You will be sitting for the first part of the session. Keep your spine as supported and erect as possible and your feet planted firmly on the floor. Remember

to breathe! Reach across your chest with your right arm, resting your arm on your chest and placing your right hand on your left shoulder. Cradle the right elbow with your left hand for support. Gently begin kneading the tissues of your left shoulder, as soft or firm as is in your comfort zone. You can make circles with your fingers or knuckles, squeeze with your fingers and thumb, or just use pressure to compress the tissues. Work your way up the back of your neck, using the cradling hand to assist in pushing the right arm up. Grasp the back of the neck (sort of like you would a kitten) and squeeze. Hold this tension for ten seconds. Repeat. On the second squeeze, gently stretch the tissues behind the neck by taking your chin toward your chest. Hold for ten seconds. Repeat this process on the other side.

Still sitting, lengthen your spine by gently lifting up from the top of your head. When you do this your chin should drop a little toward your chest. Gently allow your left ear to drop toward your left shoulder, stretching the tissues of the right side of your neck and shoulder. You can assist this stretch by reaching over the top of your head with your left hand and pulling the head in the same direction. Hold the stretch to the count of ten. Repeat on the right side. Next, staying tall through your spine, turn your head toward the left as far as it can comfortably go, and assist the stretch by taking your left hand and placing it on the right side of your face, pulling your cheek toward the stretch. Hold to the count of ten. Repeat on the

right side. Now, gently drop your chin to your chest. You can increase this stretch by lifting up the back of your head, lengthening your spine even more. Relax and gently allow your head to stretch back, supporting your head by placing interlaced hands behind the neck and stretching over your hands, allowing your mouth to open and your jaw to relax. Lifting up tall from the top of your head once again, imagine you have a pencil coming out of the top of your head with the lead pointing toward the ceiling. Begin making small circles with your head, drawing imaginary concentric circles on the ceiling with the pencil. After you have drawn five circles, reverse the process, drawing large circles to small in the other direction.



Find a place to recline. Rub your hands briskly together and place them over your eyes. Hold your hands over your eyes to a count of ten. Take a couple of breaths. Gently move your hands toward your temples and rub in circles, first in one direction, then the other, moving out toward your hairline.

Rub your forehead and your scalp, softly or vigorously, whichever feels best to you. Give your ears a gentle tug down, and squeeze the perimeters of your ears. Stick your tongue out and make a funny face. Rub your cheeks and jaw, under your jaw, and gently rub your throat. A little cream or lotion can help with friction. Rub your scars and let them know you care. Give your hands a little kiss and your soul will remember, until your next massage, how much love you have within.

THE RIGHT TOUCH, III

Second in a Series on Stretching and Self-Massage

In this session, we will deal with the shoulders, upper back, rib cage and chest. Let's get right to work.

In the first of this series, I mentioned the need to recognize your tools, as they are many and varied. Today, we will incorporate a tennis ball as a massage tool. You may not want to share your pet's toy so it's better to have one designated for your use only!

In the first part of this session, you will be sitting in a chair with a strong back. Plant your feet firmly on the ground and stretch tall from your spine, lengthening your spine, vertebra by vertebra. Notice your breath. Keep your breathing easy and deep. We'll begin this session with some warming up movements. Stretch your right arm above your head, reaching really high, then let your left arm follow, reaching over your head toward the ceiling. Keep your head straight and your eyes looking forward. Gently stretch your fingers, then your hands, up, one at a time, as if climbing a ladder. Allow your rib cage to release with these gentle stretches, and be aware of your breath. Feel your sitting bones remain in contact with the chair you are in as you reach your arms toward the sky. Climb ten rungs on the ladder, then allow your arms to come to your sides, bringing one down at a time. Check your spine for length, and then check in with your breathing. Are you relaxed? Is more breath coming in?

Next, with your arms to your side, gently reach your right fingers toward the floor. Allow your ribs to curve toward the side, and form a C-shape, finally allowing your head to follow to complete the curve. Don't lean over so far as to lose your balance! Hold this stretch to

a count of ten, slowly come back to the starting point and rest for a couple of seconds. Repeat on the left side.

When is the last time you gave yourself a big hug? Reach your right arm across your chest, and then your left arm across your chest under the right one. Give yourself a big squeeze. Then open your arms, stretching them slowly out, then, with palms turned facing



behind you, stretch your arms as far back as you can, opening your chest as you breathe. Pull your shoulder blades together to increase the stretch. Hold to a count of ten, and then release. Bring your left arm across your chest, following with the right arm underneath, and hug yourself again. Then, allow your arms to stretch back as you did before. Feel your breath as your chest opens. Hold to a count of ten and release. Give your fingers, then your hands, then your arms a good shake.

What happened to the tennis ball you have? If you left it on the floor, the cat probably batted it under the couch, so dig it out. It's time to use it. It will be used here as an "active" compression tool. Holding the tennis ball in your left hand, press it against the tissues on your upper chest, your pectoral muscles. (The pectoral muscles are two large fan shaped muscles covering the upper rib cage.) Keeping your hand

relaxed, press and roll the ball slowly to compress the muscles in your chest. Use whatever pressure is comfortable for you. If you find a sore spot, by all means give it some special attention. Press the ball on these sore spots, hold and breathe to a count of ten. Allow the tissues to relax and soften as you press the ball into them. Work the sternum (in the middle of the chest) and as close under your collarbone as you can. Roll and press the ball on the area of your chest where your arm meets your torso. (Stay away from your underarm.) You can even roll the ball on your rib cage. Switch the ball into your right hand **Before** your left hand gets tired. Remember, the name of this game is:

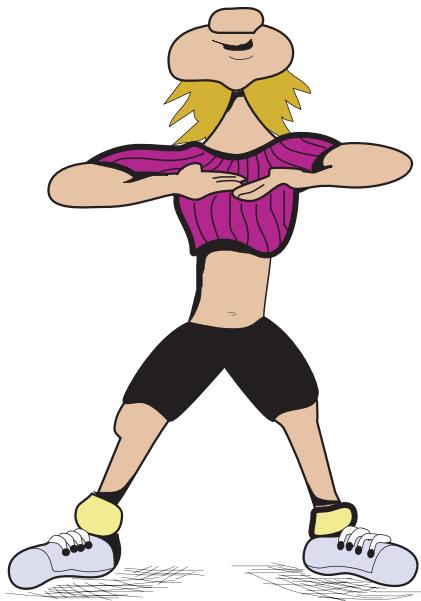
Feel Really Good!!

Try this: place the ball between your back and the chair back. Press gently and allow the tissues of your back to relax around the ball.

Hold to a count of fifteen. Release and move the ball to the next spot, repeating the process of compress and release, covering as much of your back as you can comfortably reach.

The tennis ball has a variety of uses. It will be used here as a “passive” compression tool. Try this out, and if the pressure is too hard for you, place a folded towel between you and the ball.

Find a comfortable place to lie on the floor. A carpeted area is best. Have the tennis ball close by. Gently lower yourself to the floor, working your way to a lie-down-with-your-knees-bent-up position, feet flat on the floor. Take a few breaths and really relax. The clue to make this next massage work is patience. Roll over a little to your left and place the ball under



your back on the right side. You can work any area of the back except directly on the spine. Use your legs to raise yourself over and then lower yourself onto the ball, allowing your body weight to do the work. As you feel the pressure of the ball between you and the floor, use your breath as a tool to allow the tight tissues to soften. Breathe into the pressure and allow the breath to escape slowly from your chest. Feel your body mold around the ball. You can lie on the same spot until you no longer feel the ball there, or for as long as it takes for the tissues to release. When you are ready to work the next area, lift your body up with your legs and pelvis, then roll one direction or another on the ball to find the next spot. Work on your back for ten to fifteen minutes, and take care when coming back to a sitting position. Slowly push yourself to standing.

The rest of this session will be done standing in a doorway. Choose an unobstructed doorway, the narrower, the better. Stand right at the outside of the door. Hold your palms together 12 inches in front of your chest, heels of the hands toward the chest, fingers pointing away from you, elbows out to the side. Relax your shoulders and breathe. On an out breath, squeeze the entire hands together, palms to fingertips, holding firmly to a count of ten. Then drop your arms to your sides for a count of five. Step your entire body into the doorway with one foot in front of the other. Raise your hands and arms up onto the outside of the door jamb, placing your fingers, palms, forearms and elbows on the jamb, right at chest height. Gently lean your body onto the forward leg, doing a small easy lunge, allowing the chest to open as you move forward, stretching through your upper body and chest. Hold this stretch to a count of ten. Release your arms. Give them a shake. Relax and repeat, this time leaning forward onto the other leg. Good going! Give yourself another hug. This hug is not just to congratulate yourself but it relaxes the tissues just stretched in the chest, so it's needed.

Remember that these times you give to yourself are very important in your wellness, no matter where you are in your life. Regular massage and stretching is an adjunct to your total health program!

THE RIGHT TOUCH, III

Third in a Series on Stretching and Self-Massage

How do you know when it's time for a massage or time to stretch, or even if you need to do either? What are the benefits?

As I said in my first article, touch is necessary for the health of the body, mind and spirit. There is a great deal of research that has been done on the benefits of massage and stretching. The two main physical benefits of both are increased circulation and increased mobility in the soft and bony structures of the body. The psychological benefits are increased relaxation, a sense of vitality and heightened awareness. The spiritual benefits are a better connection with your self and a sense of serenity.

Stretching. Isn't that something we do naturally? When my clients ask, "when is the best time to stretch?" I refer them to a lesson I learned from my

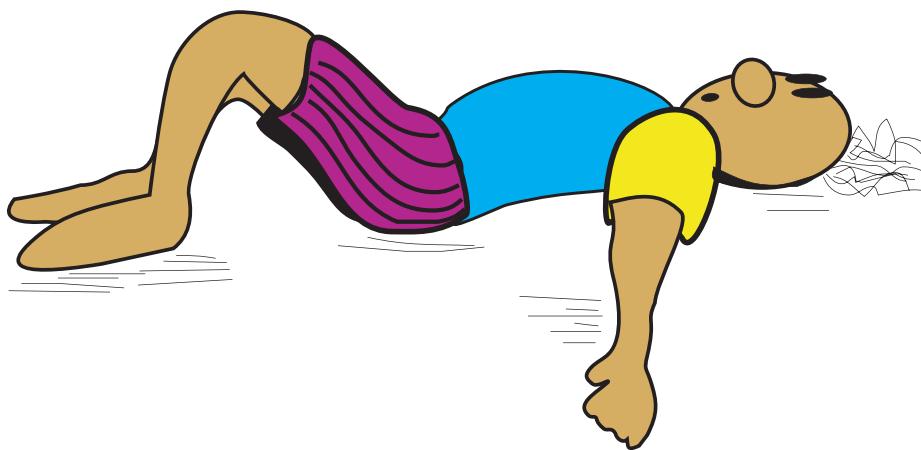
This includes working at a computer or at a desk job, or sitting in front of the TV.

Massage is another anytime activity. Make it an everyday, anytime routine. Get a friend or partner involved. Self-massage? Allow your self a little self-indulgence! Remember: if it feels good, do it!

In this session, we will incorporate the hips, ribs and lower back, as well as the diaphragm (your breathing muscle) into your massage and stretching routine. Remember that these sessions are designed for you as a laryngectomee, but anyone can benefit from them.

You will need a bath towel, rolled up tightly lengthwise, for the end of this session. You can roll two towels together if necessary. See how it feels with one, and then decide if you want the second.

This session will be done lying on a firm surface, preferably the floor or on your bed if necessary. If you have lower back problems, place a firm pillow under your knees. You may choose to put a very small pillow or folded hand towel under your head, but nothing much larger. Begin by warming up. Gently ease your self to the floor and relax. Breathe slowly and comfortably.



cat. I notice whenever she gets up from a lying down position she always stretches out! How smart is that? I believe that there is not a wrong time to stretch. Anytime you are doing or expect to do any type of physical labor or physical task is a good time to stretch. For how long should you stretch? Here's a formula. Allow five minutes stretching time for each forty-five minutes of activity. The more arduous the activity, the more stretching time you need to add to the formula.

Reach one arm over your head and let it lie on the floor above you, then follow with the other. If you have trouble getting your arm flat on the floor, use folded towels to prop them at a comfortable level. Reach your right hand up, as if climbing a ladder. Then release your ribs as you stretch and reach up for the ladder with the right hand. Breathe and allow your body to relax with the stretch. Reach up and release ten times on each side, alternating right and left. Then slide your arms down to your sides,

stretching out toward the sides all the while. When your hands are by your sides turn your palms facing down. Rest your arms at your sides for a moment. Reach your right hand down toward your right foot, sliding your palm by the side of your leg along the floor, allowing your head to gently roll to the right as your body gently curves to the right. Reach down as far as feels comfortable for you and hold to a count of ten. Breathe into the left side of your chest and rib cage, feeling the expansion on the left side as you inhale. Bring your right hand back to the starting point and repeat on the left side. Allow yourself plenty of time and reach down ten times on each side, alternating right and left. Remember to allow your head to roll and your neck to be soft and flexible with your movements. Take a moment to notice any changes in your breathing and see if your chest is more relaxed.

Now it is time to incorporate your legs. Position your legs so your kneecaps are pointing toward the ceiling, and your toes are pointing straight up. Gently step down with the heel of your right foot, sliding your heel on the floor away from your buttocks, bringing your toes headward, straightening and lengthening your leg, making it long, long, longer. Breathe as you step down toward the far wall. Hold for five seconds. Release and straighten your left leg, stepping down with your left heel as you gain length, allowing your lower back to release to allow you even more length in your leg. Hold to the count of ten. Once again, step down ten times with each leg, alternating right to left, rocking through your pelvis as one hip goes up and the other down, a natural movement that comes with the stretch.

Notice as you slowly move: is there a place that is hindering my movement? If so, you can locate that spot, and if it is within reach, stop your movement and gently massage the area for a few seconds with you



hands or fingers. You can massage those harder-to-reach places by placing a tennis ball between the spot and the floor and gently releasing the tissues as you lie on the ball. Then continue with your movements.

Are you ready to put it all together? Once again, place your arms above your head, one at a time, resting them on the floor. Time for a little coordination. Give

your self time to practice this and be patient. Breathe. Reach up for the rung of the ladder with your right hand, lengthening your arm, and step down with your right heel, lengthening your leg at the same time. Feel your ribs open on the right side and your chest fill with healing breath as you stretch upward and downward. Allow your head to roll in the direction that feels natural for it. Release after five seconds and as you release the right side, reach up and down with the left hand and heel. Breathe. Are your hips going up and down, your shoulders rocking on your spine? What in the world is going on here? You are rocking and rolling! Continue this healthy stretch for as long as it feels good to you.

Roll over on your side and push your self up to a sitting position. Retrieve your towel and place it lengthwise next to you. You will need to get back to the floor, lowering your self onto the towel, so the towel runs the length of your spine, on your spine, from the bottom of the curve in your neck to your tailbone. Allow your self time to adjust to the towels presence. Your breath is the tool you use to relax, allowing the tissues of your spine to relax over the towel with each exhale.

Gently draw one leg up at a time, coming to the lie-down-with-your-knees-bent-up position. With each of these stretches, you will repeat three times on each side. Slowly draw your left knee toward your chest, pressing your lower back and sacrum (the triangular-shaped bone at the base of your spine)

down onto the towel as the knee comes up. You may choose to wrap your interlaced fingers around your knee, gently increasing the stretch. Hold your knee up for ten seconds, release your lower back, and then lower your leg. Repeat on the other side. Squeezing your knees together, gently allow your knees to fall a little bit to the right side, stretching out the left lower back, maintaining your balance on the towel. Hold for ten seconds and repeat on the other side. Finally, raise your right leg and straighten it at the knee, with the sole of your foot facing the ceiling. See if you can step up toward the ceiling. Bring your leg back to the

bent position and place your foot back on the floor and repeat on the left side. Roll to one side and come to a sitting position, then, when you are ready, to a standing position.

Rub your hands together briskly for five seconds. Clap five times. Give your self a good pat on the right shoulder, and then the left. Congratulations! You have succeeded in letting your self know that you care enough to do something about it! Be well and at peace.

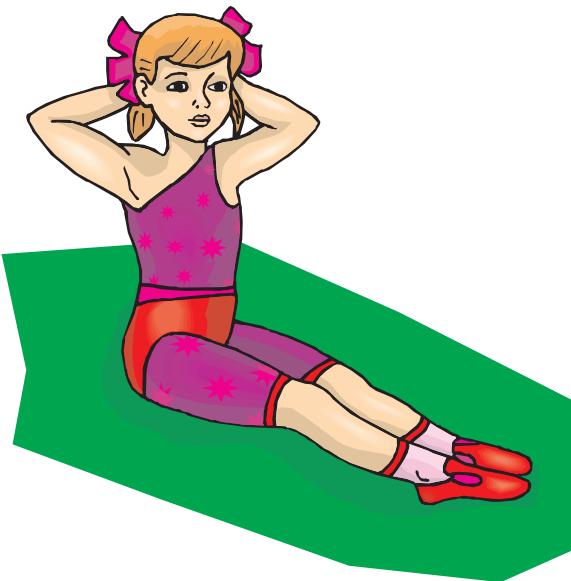
THE RIGHT TOUCH, IV

Forth in a Series on Stretching and Self-Massage

Hi there. We are here again in the series on stretching and self-massage. In the previous three sessions, we covered the chest and back, ribs and breathing apparatus, shoulders and neck. We discussed that there are various tools to use in massage and even incorporated a tennis ball and a towel in our sessions. You may want to consider reading, or having someone read, these sessions into a tape recorder and playing them back as you stretch or do self-massage. If you do so, then be sure to do it slowly, giving yourself time to do each of the movements or exercises.

In this session, we will focus directly on healing on and around the laryngectomy site. As you may know, there are different types of laryngectomy surgeries, and each has its own purpose and focus but these surgeries have in common the trauma on the tissues of the neck and surrounding areas. Lymph nodes and glands are often removed, destroyed, or aggravated. There is scar tissue, and radiation may have taken its toll on the skin and underlying tissues. I have found that the amount of self-care information offered to post-surgery patients does not include self-massage. Remember that this is **your** body we are talking about here and it is time for you to realize that **you** are in charge of it! So, off we go! It is time to really explore and discover what your particular needs are around your surgery site.

To do this massage, you will need some cream or lotion. I prefer to use cocoa butter, which, in its pure form, is solid. Cocoa butter is very emollient and penetrates into the tissues as well, allowing for the perfect amount of friction necessary to do the massage. Pure cocoa butter is available at the beauty supply store and



at most pharmacies. If you cannot find it, any cream is better than none.

In today's massage, your hands will be your tools. You will sit in a very comfortable chair (a recliner is great) for this session. You can also prop yourself in the bed or on the sofa with lots of cushions or pillows for support. First, while sitting or standing, a little warm up exercise. Place the palms of your hands together about six inches in front of your chest, fingers matching, and point your fingers away from you. Your thumbs are pointing up. Spread your hands out, fingers still matching. See how wide you can make the spaces between your fingers. Use the

fingers on your right hand to gently stretch the fingers on your left hand by pushing them back, giving a good stretch through the wrist and then reverse the stretch. Hold to a count of ten on each side and repeat three times. Give your hands a good shake out. Gently pull each finger and each of your thumbs. Pinch all the way around the ends of your fingertips. Clap twice. Give your hands a brisk rub on both palm and backside. Now, on to the massage.

We will begin with a relaxation exercise. Reclining comfortably, close your eyes and watch your breath. Without changing your breath, you might notice that it gets slower and more regular by just watching it. Allow yourself a few breaths to let go of anything that is distracting you. Allow thoughts and images to come into the forefront of your mind, and then allow them to escape your immediate thinking by breathing them out with a breath of relaxing air. You might want to imagine that your lungs are filled by a large

balloon, and that balloon fills from the top to the middle to the bottom as you breathe in, and that the balloon empties from bottom to middle to top as you breathe out. Filling top to middle to bottom and letting go from bottom to middle to top. Allow yourself a few breaths to get the sensation of letting go of any stress as you breathe out, and filling up with a sense of calm, relaxing energy as you breathe in. Filling up and letting go. Give yourself a few moments to deal with the images that come into your mind, letting them go as you breathe, and getting in touch with a sense of inner calm.

When you feel that you have let go of as many distractions as you can, turn your attention to your the area around your surgical site. Have you ever explored the soft tissues there? Reach up and feel the area from behind ears at your hairline around to your jaw. Gently rub in small circles, holding down the skin, rubbing the tissues just underneath the skin. Feel the bony structures and get a sense of what your particular tissues feel like. Are there sore spots? Give your ears a tug in all directions (they won't pull off!) and even stick your fingertips inside and give them a rub. Use your thumbs to rub underneath your jaw right on the bone until you reach the chin. Are there sore spots there? Now, explore the area on the front of your neck, paying particular attention to your scar, still gently rubbing in small circles. Massaging scar tissue is especially important because scar tissue can bind tissues together impeding free movement between structures. After exploring your scar, work your way around the stoma site, feeling your collarbones, over and underneath. Do you feel as if you know your throat a little better already?

Time for the real massage. Into your reclining position, please. If you are using cocoa butter, you will notice that in its pure form, it is solid. You will need

to rub it between your hands to warm it up, melting it enough to feel a little creamy. If you are using another cream or lotion, always rub it in your hands to warm it up first. The stages of this massage are palpate (checking the tissues as in the previous paragraph), warm the tissues, apply friction, then, cleanse the tissues with sweeping movements. Palpation, warming the tissues and friction can be done in any direction, while sweeping movements will always go top to bottom, flushing lymph and any by-products of the massage into the lymph system for cleansing. Isn't the body amazing?

To warm the tissues prior to friction, use the pads and tips of your fingers. I suggest using both hands for this part of the massage.



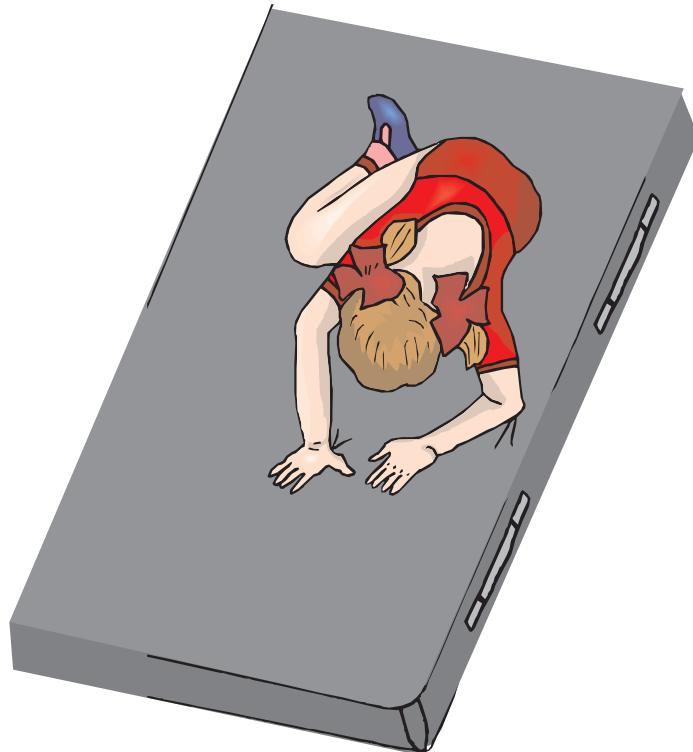
Use just enough lubricant to allow your hands to slide over the tissues, being aware that too much will not allow you to feel what is under the skin, the area we want to really massage. Not using enough will cause too much friction. You can always add or subtract lubricant. We will begin by using the hands to spread the lubricant over the entire area we are working, which is from the chin, down the front of the neck to underneath the collar bones (clavicles),

and out to the sides of the throat even with the earlobes. A note of caution: do not press deeply into any area on the front of the throat. You have major arteries and veins there and we want to avoid any pressure that might hamper blood movement. Rub the lubricant starting under your ears, working your way to under your chin, gently pulling the tissues forward. Stroke this area five times; ear to chin, and spreading the cream evenly. Then using the pads and tips of your fingers, warm the tissues from the sides of your neck into your scar by gently pulling the tissues toward the center line on your throat. Reach across your throat with your right hand, pulling the tissues from the left side toward the center, all the way from the outer edge of your collarbone to your stoma. Stroke each area five

times, feeling each stroke a bit deeper as you go. Then repeat with your left hand on the right side. Give your hands a rest and shake them out.

The next part of the massage may feel strange, but with practice it will become more comfortable with time. Support your right elbow in your left palm, laying your right arm across your chest. Using your right hand, gently pinch the tissues on your neck together, two fingers full and a thumb at a time, gently rolling the tissues together, lifting the skin away from the underlying tissues. Breathe. Notice that some areas are more tender than others are. These areas need special attention. Rub them for a bit longer until the tenderness subsides. Work around to your scar and give it special attention. Lifting, squeezing and frictioning the scar tissue allows blood flow to the scar to increase and increases mobility of the scar itself. Switch hands as needed so your hands don't tire. Spend several minutes working this area, and then turn your attention to your collarbones. Use your fingertips, holding down the skin and rubbing the deeper tissues. One at a time and cradling your elbow in your opposite hand, rub the left bone with your right fingertips, then allow

your fingers to dip into the area above and beneath the bone. Sensitive? Rub in this area as deeply as is comfortable from the stoma to the shoulder, and then switch sides. Any area that is particularly sore can have some extra attention.



Remember to breathe and take breaks as needed to keep your hands from tiring.

OK. Cleanup time. The sweeping motions in this session are as important as any massage you will ever do. Begin by using your entire right hand, crossed over to the left side. The sweeping motion will cover from under the ear all the way over and under the clavicle to the fold at the armpit, where there are lymph ducts galore. Sweep down only. Imagine that you are using a squeegee to push any undesired water off a windshield. Ready? Ten strokes down the left side of the neck, over the clavicle, toward the fold at the armpit. Shake that hand five times when you are finished. Change hands and repeat with the left hand crossed over the right side. Shake that hand out when you have finished. Give the backs of your hands a brisk rub. Give yourself a pat on the back for a gift well given and received.

REFLEXOLOGY

Fifth in a Series on Stretching and Self-Massage

In previous self-massage and stretching sessions we utilized hands, fingers, a towel and a tennis ball as tools. In this session, foot and hand reflexology, also called reflex zone therapy, we will use fingers, thumbs (shorter fingernails are a plus!), a pencil eraser, and the curved end of a teaspoon as our tools. Did you ever imagine you had the recipe for a good massage right in your house?

Reflexology works on an ancient eastern theory that the body, divided into zones, can be treated to maintain balance in its organ, muscular and nervous systems by stimulating the coordinated areas on the feet and hands that refer to the different systems. The hands and feet, as well as each of the large toes are divided into these particular zones. Each hand and foot is divided into five zones, as is each of the large toes. I am not sure for our particular needs that it is necessary to know what organ systems or body parts are in each zone. We will do an overall treatment, with the hope that by stimulating the entire body through the zones, that your body will know how to disperse the energy from the treatment. Reflexology can be done any time, for any length of time, as long as the treatment feels good.

When treating the right hand or foot, the right side of the body is treated. The same goes for the left side. The zones in the feet run vertically, from toe tip toward the back of the heel, and eventually terminate at the ankle joint. The zones in the hand run from finger tips to the heel of the hand, with the line-up of the fingers dividing the hands into five zones.

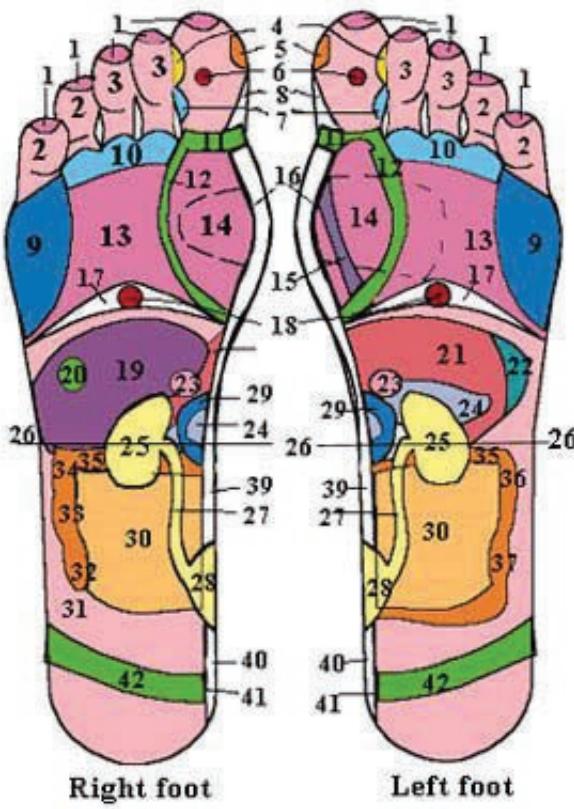
When doing these treatments, be sure to use pressure that is comfortable for you, noting spots that are tender. You may want to go back to them for additional treatment. If you are curious, you can look on the reflexology charts to see what the tender spots coordinate with in your body. There are many web sites where you can find more information.

You will be sitting somewhere comfortable for this session. You will need to be able to access the bottoms of your feet as much as possible, so sitting on a bed, sofa, or chair is okay, as is the floor. Make sure you have adequate support for your back. As always, it is important to warm up your hands before doing any type of massage. Here is a great exercise. Clap your hands three times. Rub your palms together briskly, noting the warmth from the friction. Use your left hand to briskly rub the back of your right hand, taking time and care to rub in between the fingers, giving the webbing a little extra attention. Roll each finger and thumb, squeezing each as it is rolled. Rub your wrist and forearm, around to the elbow. Shake out your left hand that just did all the work, allowing it time to relax, then repeat on the other side, with the right hand rubbing the left. When you are finished, give both of your hands a good shake, then your entire arms.

You can enhance your massage by varying the intensity of your grip, or increasing or decreasing the rhythm and/or pressure of your movements. Using a delicate strength will allow you to work longer with your hands. Do not rely simply on the muscular strength of your hands. Rather see them as dexterous, flexible and resourceful tools. When using the pencil eraser or spoon, use a gentle grip that won't tire your hands.

The first sequence is the "get to know your foot" part of the reflexology session. In your seated position, you need to gain access to the bottom of your foot. So, that may mean crossing the left leg over the right at the knee, or if you are on the bed or floor, simply turning your bent left leg outward to access the sole of the left foot. First, grasp your left foot with both hands and give it a good one minute, all-over squeeze.

The next sequence is rhythm and pressure. Holding the top of your foot with your fingers, wrapping your thumbs around to the sole of your foot, press the sole



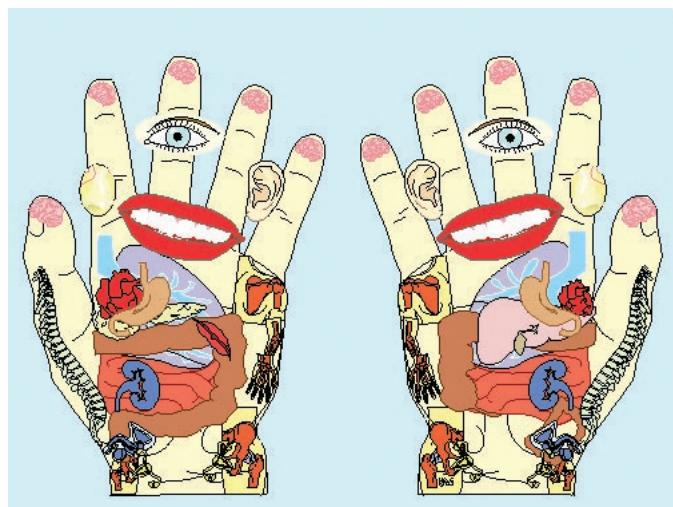
1. Brain
2. Sinuses/outer ear
3. Sinuses/inner ear/eye
4. Temple
5. Pineal/hypothalamus
6. Pituitary
7. Side of neck
8. Cervical spine
9. Shoulder/arm
10. Neck/helper to eye, inner ear
11. Neck/thyroid/tonsils
12. Bronchial/thyroid helper
13. Chest/lung
14. Heart
15. Esophagus
16. Thoracic spine
17. Diaphragm
18. Solar plexus
19. Liver
20. Gallbladder
21. Stomach
22. Spleen
23. Adrenals
24. Pancreas
25. Kidney
26. Waist line
27. Ureter tube
28. Bladder
29. Duodenum
30. Small intestine
31. Appendix
32. Ileocecal valve
33. Ascending colon
34. Hepatic flexure
35. Transverse colon
36. Splenic flexure
37. Descending colon
38. Sigmoid colon
39. Lumbar spine
40. Sacral spine
41. Coccyx
42. Sciatic nerve

of your foot with your thumbs, using a mild pressure in the following sequence, dividing the foot into five sections toe to heel. Start at the big toe joint at the foot, under the big toe, pressing down, thumb width by thumb width, through the arch to the heel. Alternate thumbs as needed, making sure not to put too much pressure on the thumb joints. (You can actually get a rhythm going when you become more experienced.) Then go under the next toe and work your way to the back of the heel and repeat until the little toe and outside edge of your foot has been treated. It is not necessary to cover every millimeter of your foot. Next is the pressure sequence. Treat each of your toes, beginning with the big toe, by pressing the underside of each toe, from the toenail, over the top, to the joint at the foot, covering the entire surface area of the bottom of the toe. When finished, give each toe a nice, firm squeeze. Turn your attention to your ankle joints, pressing around the ankle bones in a circle. Push your finger in the spaces between your toes and stretch your toes to the sides, then grasp each and stretch back and forth. Rub your left foot all over, clap your hands three times and give your hands a good shake out.

Rest if you need to, and then repeat the two sequences on the other foot.

spoon? These are alternate/additional tools for pressure. If you have trouble doing the treatment with your thumbs, try using the eraser end of a pencil, or the curved end of a spoon. You can also do a light treatment with your thumbs, then an additional, deeper second treatment with your tools. Make sure that there is adequate support under your foot, and that you don't press so hard as to cause damage.

The hand treatment is the same as the foot treatment, except it is all done with the hand against a firm surface. Since you can only utilize one hand to do a treatment on the other, this is a perfect time to try your tools. Give your entire left hand a firm squeeze



with your right hand. Support your hand on your lap. Press the area from the finger joint at the hand, thumb first, all the way to the wrist, dividing the hand into five sections, just as you did your foot. When treating your fingers, only use your opposite hand and not the tools. Be sure to really rub and squeeze the webbed area between your fingers, which is so full of sensation. Use your right hand to separate the fingers of the left, passively stretching and bending the fingers back and forth. Clap your hands three times, give them a shake, and repeat on the right hand.

Many experts in the field of reflexology believe (through experience with treatments) that treatment

on the feet is much more effective than on the hands. Perhaps that is because we are constantly bearing weight through our feet, and that our hands, used throughout the day in a non-weight bearing manner, tend to get treatments vicariously.

My belief is simple. Touch is touch. More is better. It is all essential.

Have a healthful and happy experience with touch and feel free to E-mail me with any questions about the sessions we have covered in this series so far, or about your special needs regarding touch therapy.

THE RIGHT STRETCH

Sixth in a Series on Stretching and Self-Massage

Hi again. I am Shari Aizenman, a massage therapist in Atlanta and Birmingham. I have been doing massage professionally for seventeen years. In addition to self-massage, which I encourage all of my clients to practice, I also teach stretching as part of a regular self-care routine. I am designing this series especially for laryngectomees, although these stretches can be utilized by anyone desiring the benefits offered as part of a regular stretching routine.

First things first. What, who, why, where and how?

Stretching is defined as the sustained lengthening of a muscle beyond its normal limit. Muscles only have two capabilities: contraction and relaxation. Therefore, stretching is a passive exercise on the muscles and tendons to lengthen previously shortened fibers. The different types of stretching are 1) active, where the person does their own stretches from a set point, lengthening the muscle; 2) passive, where an assistant stretches the muscle for you; 3) active assisted, where you and an assistant work together to stretch; 4) resistive, where an assistant resists your stretch, and then as you release, stretches the muscle for you. In this series, we will be focusing on active stretching, although we will do a little self-assisted resistive stretching. I will also include a couple of yoga postures, called asanas, in this program.

Everyone can benefit from stretches. As a certified infant massage instructor, I teach caregivers of newborns how to gently stretch their babies in an ancient Indian method of massage. We all know that athletes use stretching as an integral part of their routine to prevent and recover from injuries. As we age, keeping our bodies flexible allows us more freedom of move-

ment and faster recovery from injuries.

The benefits of stretching are many. Most importantly, the muscles and tendons being stretched are kept elastic and the joints, over which the tendons are attached, are kept oiled and mobile. Stretching assists in cleansing toxins from the soft tissues of the body. It also increases blood flow to the area being stretched.

Stretching can be done anywhere, in almost any position. We will be working on the floor or bed, in a chair, and standing. Allow ten to fifteen uninterrupted minutes for each of the stretching sessions. We will work one section of the body at a time, and at the end, will have an all-over, everyday stretching routine.

When stretching, remember these simple rules:

1. A slow sustained stretch gives the best results.
No bouncing!
2. Go to the limit of your range of motion and hold the stretch ten to twenty seconds and release.
3. After a stretch, gently return the body part being stretched to its original set position.
4. If you feel pain — **BACK OFF!**
5. Do each stretch two or three times.
6. Inhale before a stretch, and slowly exhale as you stretch. Breathe at least one full breath while in the stretch and release on another inhalation.
7. Relax, relax, relax into the stretch and watch that other body parts are not tensing as you stretch.

So, let's get started! You will need a couple of tools for this series of stretches. Have a tennis ball, a cane or yardstick, and a hand towel available.

Our first session will focus on the head, neck,



shoulders and upper back. You can sit in a chair that has a back for the first part of the session. Always take a moment before stretching to prepare your body, tools, and working space, and to get rid of any distractions. Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor and breathe deeply three times. Breathe in through your nose, and out of your mouth (I just put that in for non-larys because, for them, it makes a difference.)

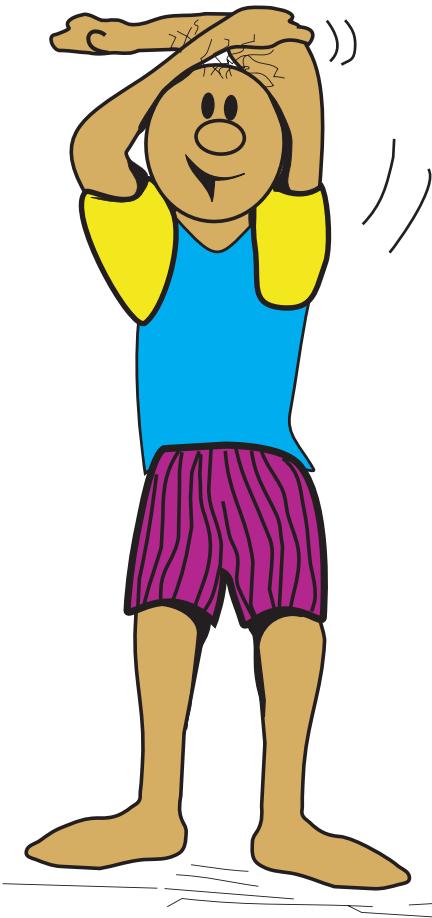
Begin your routine by rotating the joints at the ends of your fingers. Use your left hand to move the joints of your right hand, working from your fingertips to your hands, then rotate both wrists in either direction, bend your elbows to their full range, open and close at the elbow. Then rotate your left arm at the shoulder, making small circles to large in one direction, then the other. Repeat with your right arm. Then take a moment to focus on your head and neck. First, imagine that there is a pencil coming out of the top of your head. Slowly draw small circles on the ceiling with the pencil in a clockwise direction. As you complete one circle, begin the next, larger circle, continuing until the circles can get no larger. Take time and be aware of any sore or tight areas while making your circles. Repeat the circle drawing in the other direction.

Now that you have warmed the area to be stretched, take a couple of relaxing breaths. Now it is time to stretch. Take a breath in and, as you exhale, allow your left ear to drop toward your left shoulder, taking care not to turn your chin downward. This stretch will imitate the sun, rising and falling over your shoulders. As you breathe out, reach your left arm over your head, placing the fingers of your left hand just above your right ear. On the next exhale, gently pull your left ear more toward your shoulder and feel the stretch on the right side of your neck. Hold this stretch for ten seconds or so and repeat on the right side. Repeat left and right.

Next, turn your head toward the left, imagining that it is like a pig on a spit, not bending the chin up

or down, keeping your nose in a straight line. When you reach your limit, breathe into the stretch, reach up with your left hand, taking your chin gently and on the next exhale, pull your head a little more to the left. Repeat on the right side. Repeat left and right.

Imagine that there is a string running through the top of your head, right on the space where a line running from the top of each ear would land. Pull this imaginary string straight up, allowing your chin to gently drop and your spine to elongate. When it is as long as possible, gently roll forward, taking your chin toward your chest, one vertebra at a time, feeling a good stretch through the upper part of your back. If you would like, you can assist this stretch by placing either hand on the back of your neck and pull gently forward. When you are ready to release this stretch, do so by coming up in the reverse order, bottom to top. Then, gently stretch your neck backward, lifting your chin and taking care not to compress the back of your neck. See the difference in sensation stretching with your mouth open and closed. If you want to increase this stretch, jut your jaw out. Check in; are you breathing through this stretch?



Next, stretch your left arm across your chest, placing your left hand on your right shoulder. With your right hand cradling your left elbow, on an exhale gently pull your left elbow across your chest and feel the stretch in your left shoulder and upper arm. Hold this stretch for ten seconds.

Drop your left arm and repeat on the same side. Then do the same with your right arm, assisting with your left.

If your range of motion allows, place your bent left arm behind your head, elbow in the air. Reach over the top of your head with your right hand and pull your left elbow behind your head, stretching the area around your left armpit. Repeat on the right side.

Now, imagine a ladder going upward from your shoulders. On an exhale, reach for the first rung of

maybe four or five.

Now it is time to stand up. Take a moment to breathe as we bring this session to completion with a few relaxing stretches. Plant your feet firmly on the floor, feet wider apart than your hips.

Expanding on the ladder theme, gently reach overhead with your left arm, grabbing the first rung of the ladder again. This time press your left foot into the floor firmly, reaching up with the entire arm, fingertips, hand, forearm, elbow, upper arm and shoulder, allowing your ribs to release, taking in a deep breath and lengthening through your left side. Allow your head to bend over toward the right. Release on an exhale. Take a breath and repeat on the right side. Open up your body and relax. Repeat on each side.

Bringing this session to a close, place the palms of your hands together and bring them up into prayer position. Keeping the palms pressed together and elbows out to the sides, raise your fingertips up toward the sky, breathing and relaxing. Raise your hands as far as is comfortable for you and give thanks for the day.

See you next session.



the ladder with your left arm, stretching up through your entire torso, then allowing your left arm to drop, reaching your right arm up to grab the next rung. See how many rungs you can climb up comfortably,

THE RIGHT STRETCH, VII

Seventh in a Series on Stretching and Self-Massage

Hello and welcome back to ***The Right Stretch***, a series of articles on stretching and self-care. In our last session, we focused on the upper body: head, neck, shoulders and upper back. In session two, we are going to focus on everything that has to do directly with the lower back and legs.

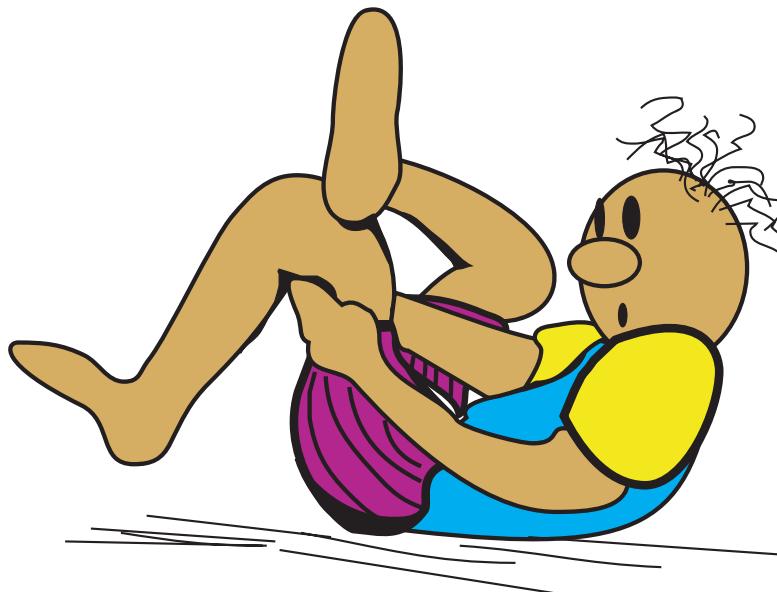
In my seventeen years as a massage therapist, I have taken numerous seminars to increase my knowledge and ability to assist my clients to achieve and maintain better health. None of these seminars has paid off more than the ones in which I learned to work with lower back pain. How many of us, at one time in our life, has had a complaint about tightness or soreness in our lower back? In my practice, the count is well over seventy percent!

Whether you are a very mobile, highly energetic person, or a little bit more sedentary, maintaining the health of your back is tantamount to your overall well being. Walking, jogging, cooking, shopping, even working at a desk job, we all are aware that our ability to remain comfortably upright is necessary to get our tasks finished.

It is my belief that a large number of lower back problems are a result of tightness in the gluteal (buttocks) region of the lower back, as well as through the hips and upper legs. Therefore, our session today will cover all of these areas. I will also include stretches for the sides of the torso to complete the session.

As always, remember to follow these simple-stretching guidelines:

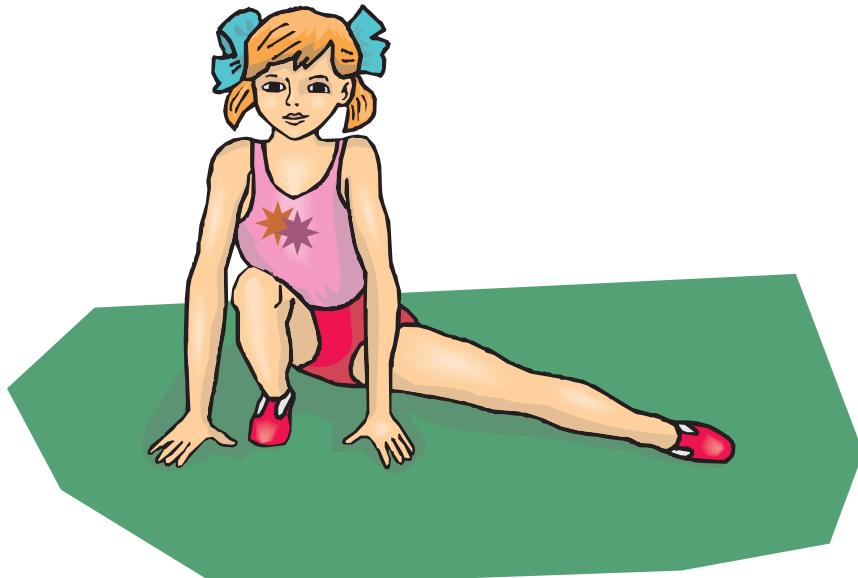
1. Keep a slow, sustained stretch. No bouncing!
2. Go to the limit of your range of motion and hold the stretch for 10-20 seconds and release.
3. After a stretch, gently return the body part being stretched to its original set position.
4. If you feel pain — **BACK OFF!**
5. Do each stretch 2-3 times.
6. Inhale before a stretch, and slowly exhale as you stretch. Breathe a full breath while in the stretch, and release on another inhalation.
7. Relax into the stretch and be aware that other body parts are not tensing as you stretch.



Let's stretch! This session will be done mostly on the floor. Choose an area to stretch that gives you plenty of room to fully stretch your arms and legs out in every direction. If you lack floor space, you can choose to stretch on a bed. Have a bath towel, small pillow or rolled up hand towel available, and one or two bed pillows as well. These will be the tools we will use in this session. Wear light, comfortable, clothing that allows lots of movement.

Gently ease yourself to the floor. If you have difficulty getting down to or back up from the floor, have a sturdy chair nearby to use as a balance or prop. You can use a table leg as well, if the table is sturdy. Sit comfortably and take three slow deep breaths. Take care to breathe slowly and with awareness, not forcing

the air in, but rather allowing space in your body to accommodate more breath, then allowing the breath to escape instead of forcing it out. Very slowly roll your head in a full circle, first taking your chin to your chest, then rolling your right ear toward the right shoulder and continuing around until your chin reaches your chest again. Notice any areas of discomfort and allow yourself a few seconds to breathe into and release any



tight areas. Then reverse the move and take your left ear toward the left shoulder and continue until your chin reaches your chest again.

Ease yourself onto your back and place the small pillow or towel roll under your head if necessary to maintain comfort in your neck. With your legs straight, drag your right foot toward your right buttock, the sole of your foot on the floor, knee pointing toward the ceiling. I will call this “standing your foot” for future reference. Now, stand your left foot. Lift your right knee toward your chin, and wrap your interlaced fingers around the top of your shin. If you need assistance getting your leg up, place the bath towel behind your knee and pull on the ends of it to lift your knee toward your chin. Pull your knee up toward your chin until you feel a stretch in your hamstrings, the muscle group on the back of your upper leg. Hold the stretch fifteen seconds, and release, allowing your foot to return to standing. Repeat this stretch three times. Do the same stretch with your left leg three times.

Again, pull your right knee up toward your chin as far as is comfortable and interlace your fingers (or use a bath towel) behind your knee. Without moving your

upper leg, extend your lower leg at the knee, taking your foot up toward the ceiling. If you can get it all the way straight, step up with your heel like you are trying to step on the ceiling. Hold ten seconds and bend at the knee, then lowering your foot to standing. Do this stretch three times, then repeat with the left leg.

Keeping your feet standing, pull them as close together as possible. Gently allow your legs to move as a unit toward the left floor, twisting through the lower spine, your upper body remaining on the floor, and your legs and lower back moving to the left. When your left leg touches the floor, take a couple of breaths and open the space in the side of your torso as you breathe. Bring your legs as a unit back to standing. Repeat on the same side. Then do the same stretch on the other side.

Are you breathing? Don’t hold your breath. Be conscious of the role of breathing as you stretch, as stretching is a mild form of exercise. Oxygen is needed to nourish and cleanse all the tissues in your body!

Slide one of your legs down until it is straight, and then the other. Lengthen your right leg by gently stepping toward the wall with your heel, bringing your toes up toward your nose. Allow your leg to lengthen by freeing your hip, lower back, and even your rib cage. Can you feel the stretch all the way through the right side of your body?

If you want to increase this stretch, raise your right arm above your head on the floor and reach as if you are trying to climb a ladder. If you cannot rest your arm on the floor above your head comfortably, place a pillow or folded towel underneath it. Repeat on the left side, and then the right. Step down with your heel and climb the ladder with your right leg and hand, then step down and climb the ladder with your left leg and hand. Repeat this entire motion ten times. After a little practice, you can feel the rocking mechanism in your hips and shoulders as your spine frees itself with the motion.

Allow yourself a moment to rest and breathe while lying on the floor. Then gently roll to one side and push yourself up to sitting position. Place one of the

bed pillows under your buttocks to lift your body just a little. You may find that if you sit closer to the front edge of the pillow, your back is a bit more supported. If this is uncomfortable for you, add enough pillows or a folded towel so that you can sit comfortably.

Place your left leg straight out, at an angle from your body, heel on the floor and toes toward the ceiling, and place the sole of your right foot on your left inner thigh. Sit as tall as you can, lengthening through your spine. Allow your hands to rest at your sides. Pivot at the waist so that your torso is in line with your left leg and gently bend forward at the hip, so that your upper body gently moves toward your left foot. Take the utmost care that you are not bending through your upper back or waist. This is a small movement, and you should feel a stretch through the back of your left leg. Hold this stretch ten seconds and release for five seconds. Breathe in and exhale as you stretch into your leg again.

Still working on your left leg, point your toes toward the ceiling. Pull your toes toward your nose until you feel a stretch behind your knee through your calf muscle. You can assist this stretch using the bath towel, placing it under the ball of your foot and pulling the ends toward your chest, bringing the ball of your foot and your toes toward your nose. Hold this stretch for twenty seconds. Release for five seconds and repeat.

Now spend a minute or two massaging the muscles on your left thigh. Use the heel of your hand to press the muscles, and using circular motions, first clockwise and then counter-clockwise, and be sure to switch hands before one tires. Rub as much of your left thigh as you can reach, working all the way down to your knee and as far up as the crease at your groin.

Switch legs, stretching your right one out at an

angle from your body, the left one on your right inner thigh and repeat the previous series of stretches and then massage.

Take a moment to breathe again before working your way back up to a standing position to complete this session. This is a simple standing posture (asana) taken from Hatha yoga. Stand with your feet wider apart than your hips, toes pointing forward. Relax and allow any tension to release out of your body. As you inhale, slowly raise your right arm, palm facing down, out from the side of your body. When your arm reaches shoulder height, turn your palm upward and continue to raise your arm toward your ear. As you exhale, slowly bend at the waist, leaning your body toward the left, allowing your left arm to slide down your left leg. Keep your head in line with your spine and your right arm next to your ear. Open your ribs on your right side and stay in this stretch through one breath cycle. Inhale and slowly return to standing posture. Repeat on the other side.

This asana is called the abdominal lift. Standing with your legs wider apart than your hips, bend your knees slightly and lean forward from your waist only enough to place your hands on your thighs, right above your knees. Exhale completely. Suck your abdominal area in and up, pulling your navel toward your spine. Hold this position through a breath cycle and then release, inhaling slowly. Slowly return to standing and breathe for a moment.

Sense the relaxation in your body and mind and take an internal picture of it. Imagine yourself doing your daily tasks from this place if you can. When you are ready, thank yourself for time well spent, make that imagination into a reality, and enjoy your flexible, strong body!

⇒Notes⇒