

Neck, Shoulder and Back Relaxer

If you're feeling tense or stressed, your neck and shoulders may start to hurt, because they're tense too. Use these simple stretches any time you feel tight and uncomfortable, or like you could do with an unwind. Breathe slowly and deeply as you practise these movements. Focus on your breathing and the sensations in your body rather than the things that have been bothering you. You may find your worries have quietened down afterwards.

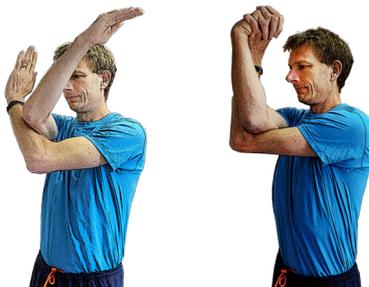
1. Head tilts

Stay in each position for three slow, deep breaths, mindful of how your neck feels.



2. Eagle

Press your elbows together in front of you and work on lifting them to shoulder height. Do this for five slow breaths then change sides. Your arms might look like either of the pictures below – both are good if you can feel the stretch across the upper back.



3. Cow face

Five breaths each side. If your hands can reach each other, that's great. If not, use a sock or towel to connect them.



Neck, Back and Shoulder Relaxer (cont)

4. Back stretch

Find a ledge to rest your hands on and fold over. Keep your neck in line with the rest of your spine. Take five deep breaths.



5. Shoulder stretch

Clasp your hands behind your back, let your head hang loose and pull your hands far away from your bum. Stay for five slow breaths.



6. Child

Relax like this for five slow breaths. Put your head on a pillow or rest it on your hands (one fist on top of another) if it doesn't reach the floor.



7. Floor twist

Open up slowly into this twist. You may not have room to stretch your arms out – just do your best. Stay like this for five slow breaths and then twist out again on the other side.



8. Rest

Lie like this and focus on your breathing, and the feeling the breath makes as it flows in and out of you. You can count your breaths if you want – up to ten and then start again – or just enjoy the quiet. If your attention wanders away from the breath, just guide it gently back. Stay like this for five minutes, or longer if you want. Let the work you've done to help yourself sink in.

