



ELITE

UPPER CERVICAL

Daily Breathing & Stretching Routine to Help Eliminate Pain & Maintain your Alignment

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In the morning, we are usually rested, but stiff from inactivity. It is valuable to develop a morning routine where we bring gentle movement to our bodies before we jump into a busy day.

Since most of us sit for most of the day, by including some simple breathing and stretching throughout the day, we help to regulate the growing tension in our muscles.

At the end of a busy day, taking a few minutes to unwind the tension in our body helps us to sleep better.

This routine can possibly save you a lifetime of pain if you commit and do it regularly.

Stretching is easy to learn, but there is a right way and a wrong way to stretch. The right way is a relaxed, sustained stretch with your attention on your breathing focused on the muscles being gently stretched.

The wrong way (unfortunately practiced by many people), is to bounce up and down, or to stretch to the point of pain: these methods can actually do more harm than good.

If you stretch correctly and regularly, you will find that every movement you make becomes easier. It will take time to reduce tension and loosen up tight muscles, but time is quickly forgotten when you start to feel good.

BREATHING

Your breathing should be focused on the belly and should be slow, rhythmical, and under control.

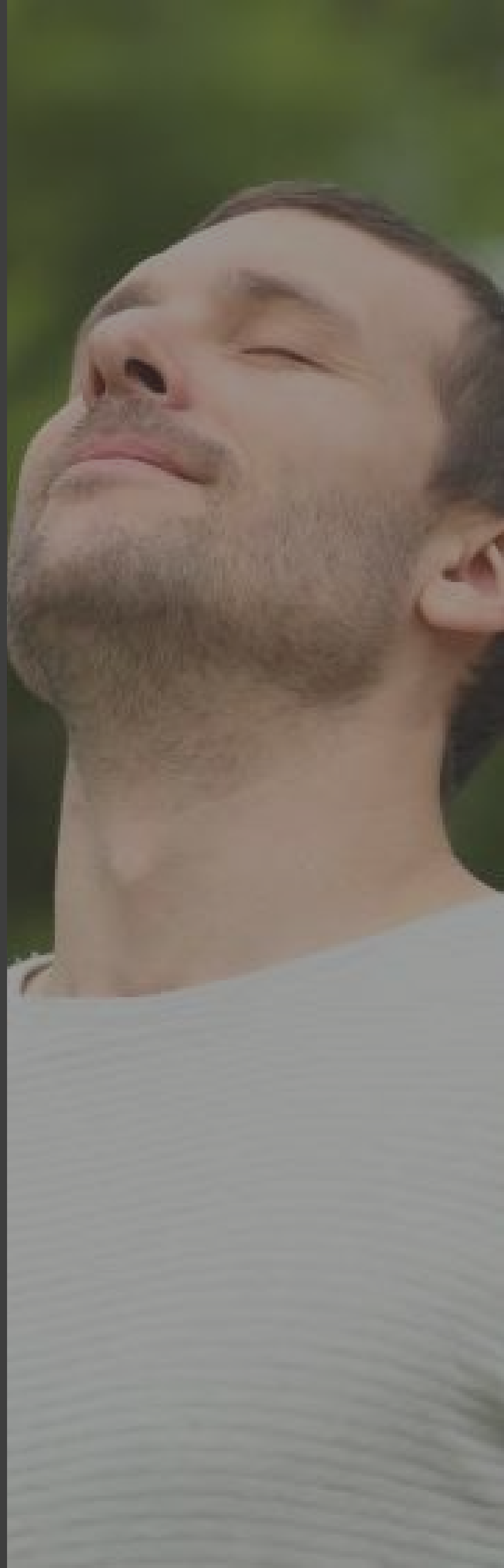
If you are bending forward to do a stretch, exhale as you bend forward and then breathe slowly from your belly as you hold the stretch.

Do not hold your breath while stretching.

If a stretch position inhibits your natural breathing pattern, then you are not relaxed. Ease up on the stretch so you can breathe naturally.

Full, complete breaths contribute to full and healthy lives. When our diaphragm expands completely, we can feel the long, deep breaths lengthen our spine, relaxing, energizing, and oxygenating it.

Deep belly breathing, also called diaphragmatic breathing helps circulate our blood and stimulate our internal organs reducing pain and tension leading to a healthier more vibrant life.



THE DIAPHRAGM

Our diaphragm is a domed sheet of muscle separating our lungs and our abdomen.

It expands down upon inhalation and comes up upon exhalation.

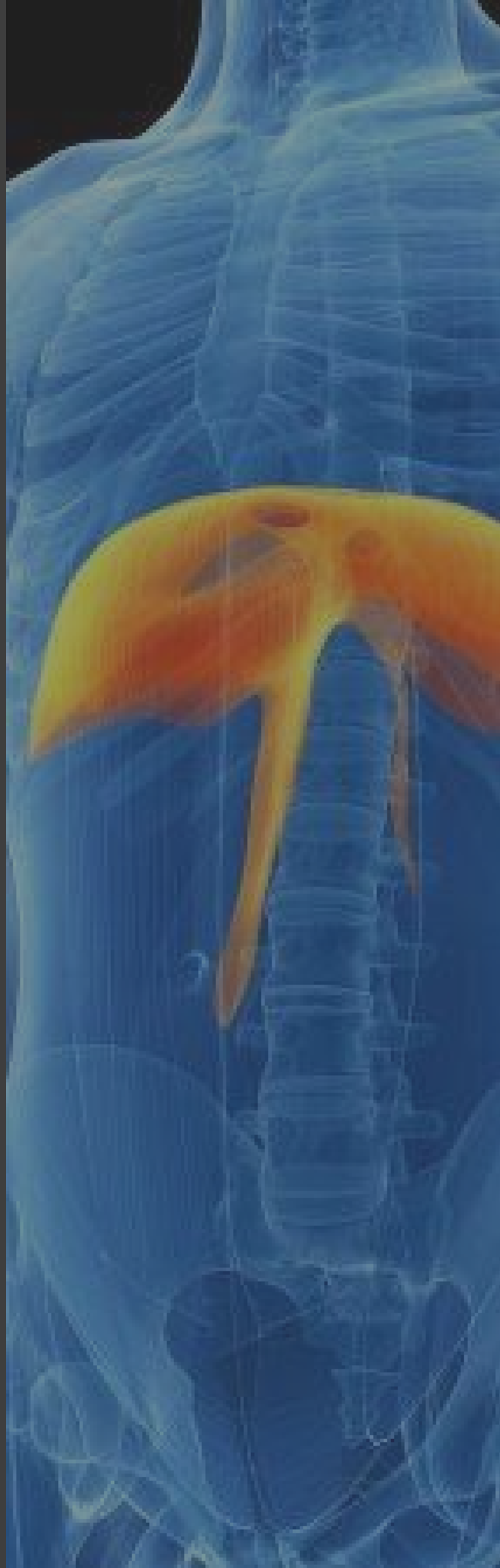
Diaphragmatic breathing is the way we were designed to breathe.

Watch babies. They use every bit of their belly, diaphragm, and lungs to breathe – and Flourish.

As adults, we guard our emotions holding back our expression by restricting the movement of our diaphragm.

Most of us become chest breathers instead of belly breathers. In order to reclaim the natural full range of our breath, we need to release our diaphragm so it can expand.

When our diaphragm relaxes, it not only pumps air into our abdomen, it also tightens and strengthens our abdominal and spinal muscles.



HOW TO BELLY BREATHE

You can practice belly breathing when you're standing, sitting, or lying down.

Start with your spine in alignment and your belly soft.

The emphasis in belly breathing is on the exhalation.

As you exhale through your nose, pull your abdomen back toward your spine.

Pause when all the air has been pushed out. Then release your abdomen by relaxing your belly.

Let the air flow freely in and out of your nose and lungs. Don't gasp for air or try to pull it in. Just let it pour naturally into the vacuum that the exhale created.

When you are comfortably filled with fresh new air and oxygen, pause again for a moment.

Repeat.



Perform the following two breathing techniques for 2-5 minutes each, then proceed to the stretching routine.

BREATHING TECHNIQUE TO NOURISH THE SPINE

Begin with three belly breaths.

On your next out-breath:

Pull your belly back toward your spine

Pull your shoulders down and back

Flex your chin into your throat feeling the back of your neck lengthen, alive with your attention.

As your breath comes in:

Relax your belly

Raise your shoulders

Tilt your head back feeling a new sensation around your spine.

Repeat.

BREATHING TECHNIQUE TO RELIEVE PAIN

Lie on your back with your feet straight out.

While belly breathing, mentally scan your body to see where your pain is coming from.

When you exhale, compress your breath out of that pain center.

As your breath comes in, keep your attention on the pain center.

Visualize your breath expanding and circulating through the center of pain, then carrying the pain out of your body with the exhaled breath.

STRETCHING

Your muscles are protected by a mechanism called the stretch reflex. Any time you stretch the muscle fibers too far (either by bouncing or over stretching), a nerve reflex responds by sending a signal to the muscles to contract; this keeps the muscles from being injured.

Therefore, when you stretch too far, you instead tighten the muscles you are trying to stretch!

You get a similar involuntary muscle reaction when you accidentally touch something hot; before you can think about it, your body quickly moves away from the heat.

Holding a stretch too far or bouncing up and down strains the muscles and activated the stretch reflex. Save this style of stretching - called active dynamic stretching - before you perform a strenuous workout.

These harmful methods can cause pain, as well as physical damage due to the microscopic tearing of muscle fibers. This tearing leads to the formation of scar tissue in the muscles, with a gradual loss of elasticity.



STRETCHING

continued

The muscles become tight and sore. How can you get enthused about daily stretching and exercise when these potentially injurious methods are used?

Many of us were conditioned to the idea of “no pain no gain”. We learned to associate pain with physical improvement, and were taught, “the more it hurts, the more you get out of it”. But don’t be fooled. Stretching, when done correctly, is not painful.

Learn to pay attention to your body, for pain is often an indication that something may be wrong.

You will find that your flexibility will naturally increase when you stretch. By regularly stretching with comfortable and painless feelings you will be able to go beyond your present limits. Those who stretch every day, also maintain their postural alignment longer reporting less pain, discomfort and dysfunction.



DAILY STRETCHING ROUTINE

For best results, stretch in the morning just after waking up and at night just before going to sleep. Hold only stretch tensions that feel good to you. Do NOT overstretch.

This routine should be done daily, even on holidays and trips!

Progress through each stretch at your own pace (minimum of 5 slow deep breaths ~30s).

Focus on your breath to help your muscles relax.



Turn & hold head to the left/right for 3 - 5 breaths.



Tilt & hold head to the left/right for 3 - 5 breaths.



Look & hold up/down for 3 - 5 breaths.

DAILY STRETCHING ROUTINE



Move & hold shoulders up/down for 3 - 5 breaths.



Hold one arm up & one arm back for 3 - 5 breaths.



Elevate & hold arms up behind you for 3 - 5 breaths.



Extend & hold arms up & over for 3 - 5 breaths.



Hold arm across chest for 3 - 5 breaths.



Hold elbows together for 3 - 5 breaths.

DAILY STRETCHING ROUTINE



Lift & hold head up
and back for
3 - 5 breaths.



Flex & hold head
down for
3 - 5 breaths.



Hold child's pose
for 3 - 5 breaths.



Bring & hold knee
to chest for
3 - 5 breaths.

DAILY STRETCHING ROUTINE



Hold both knees to chest for 3 - 5 breaths.



Lay on back w/ soles of feet together and hold for 3 - 5 breaths.



Turn & hold both knees to one side for 3 - 5 breaths,



Extend & hold arms & legs for 3 - 5 breaths,