Sit and Get Fit: Stretching & Exercises

Note that good back support is crucial during any exercise. Stop doing an abdominal exercise if you experience pain or discomfort anywhere in your back. Sit up straight with your feet flat on the floor. Breathe deeply and rhythmically throughout the exercises. Never hold your breath. Move slowly, smoothly, consciously, and gently. Never strain. Focus consciously on the muscles being stretched, strengthened or relaxed:

- **Ear-to-Shoulder Stretch:** Allow your ear to drop toward one shoulder. Do not lift your shoulder to your ear. Hold for 5-10 seconds, continue breathing, and enjoy the stretch. Repeat 3 times each side.
- **Shoulder Shrugs:** Inhale and raise your shoulders toward your ears. Hold for a few seconds to "develop" the stretch. Exhale. Release and relax your shoulders. Repeat 1-3 times.
- **Hand Rotations:** Make light fists with your palms down. Slowly circle your fists in one direction 5 – 10 times. Slowly circle your fists in the other direction 5 – 10 times.
- **Point and Flex Toes:** Raise both legs (or just one leg at a time). Point toes away from you. Hold 1-2-3. Keep breathing. Pull toes back toward you. Hold 1-2-3. Enjoy the stretch. Repeat 3-5 times.
- **Knee Lifts (While Sitting Straight):** Raise both knees. Raise the right knee a bit higher than the left, alternate. Keep breathing. Continue marching movement for 8 lifts, both sides. Feel your lower abs tighten! Repeat 3-5 times.
- **Ab Crunches:** Sit back in your chair. Straighten your back. Crisscross your arms over your chest. Begin crunching abs by pushing your chest down and out a bit until you feel a tightening in your ab muscles. Return to sitting up straight again. Crunch again in the same manner and repeat 6 times. Hold in your abs while crunching. You also can crunch your abs with your arms extended and crossed over one another at the elbows. Avoid lifting your arms above shoulder height.
- **Jackknife Kicks:** Sit near the edge of your chair and lean back, keeping your back straight. Let your shoulders lean on the back of the chair. Hold your knees and feet together and lift. Begin extending them, first to the side, then to the front and then to the other side. Repeat side–front–side and complete several sets of 6 reps. Pause to hold each position for a count of 6 seconds to maximize abdominal muscle strength.
- **Wall Squats:** *Strengthening exercise for back, hips and legs.* Stand with your back against a wall, heels about 18 inches from the wall, feet shoulder-width apart. Slide slowly down the wall into a crouch with knees bent to about 90 degrees. If this is too difficult, bend knees to 45 degrees and gradually build up from there. Count to 5 and slide back up the wall. Repeat 5 times. This is GREAT for tightening the glutes, you will notice a difference right away. Try doing 3x every day.

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