

# Stretch with Stephanie

*Maria's Place does not bear responsibility for any injury sustained while following our exercise programs.*

*Please consult your doctor before undertaking any new exercise routine, and use common sense while exercising. Listen to your body and be mindful of any existing medical conditions.*

**Key components to keep in mind throughout the routine:**

- Engage your core by squeezing your belly muscles together.
- Roll your shoulders back away from your ears and down.
- Keep your chin away from your chest and your neck in line with your spine.
- Hold each stretch for a minute or two.

**Neutral position (between each exercise):** Sit in your chair with your feet slightly apart and your hands on your lap. Pay attention to your posture throughout.

The exercises in the program are slow and deliberate movements.

## Stretch Routine

Begin in the neutral position, sit up tall, close your eyes, and bring awareness to your body. Breathe in and out several times.

Tilt your head toward one shoulder and make small movements forward and back, like you're trying to brush your shoulder with your ear. Relax all your facial muscles. Repeat on the other side.

Bring your hands to the sides of your neck. Right hand to left side and left hand to right side. Rub your neck up and down, with two fingers on each hand. Then, rub from your neck to your shoulder with slow movements.

Return to neutral. With your hands on your knees, sway your upper body side to side in small movements for a couple of minutes. If you need to, hold on to your chair for balance.

Come back to neutral. Raise one arm out in front. Slowly bring your straight arm diagonally across the front of your body. Bring your other arm below the first arm until you reach the upper arm. Gently assist the outstretched arm to intensify the stretch. Hold. Keep breathing and repeat on the other side.

Return to neutral. Bring one foot slightly forward and raise the front of the foot, keeping the heel on the ground. Bring the same side hand down to your toes and gently pull them towards your shin. Hold the stretch. Come back to neutral and repeat on the other side.

Return to neutral. Step your legs out to hip-width distance apart, feet facing out. Reach one arm toward the floor at the side, as far as is comfortable. Bring the other arm up toward the ceiling and hold the stretch. Repeat two times on both sides.

Return to neutral. With your hands on your lap, close your eyes, relax, and think positive thoughts. Take slow breaths, in through your nose, out through your mouth. After a couple of minutes, give yourself a hug, smile, and have a great rest of your day.

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