

Warm up and Stretching Exercises

These gentle exercises are an ideal warm up before any activity and are designed to improve range of movement.

Before You Start

The following are gentle warm up and stretching exercises derived from the *Tai Chi for Beginners* video by Dr Paul Lam. They should be done with 3 to 5 repetitions, alternating sides where appropriate. Please follow these guidelines:

- Do them slowly, gently, with care and at your own discretion.
- If you have any doubt, contact your personal therapist and/or instructor.
- Do them within your comfort range. If you get any discomfort, stop, and talk to your doctor.
- When you start the stretching exercises, stretch to 60 percent of your normal range, and then gradually increase the stretches.
- Hold the stretches for a few seconds.

1. Warm up

Walk around, clenching and unclenching your hands. Then, hands facing each other, move them gently up and down while waking some more.

2. Warm up and Stretching

The starting position for these exercises is standing straight, knees slightly bent, feet shoulder width apart.

Neck

1. Bring your hands up (*see picture 1*) and then press them down, at the same time slowly bending your head down. Lift palms up and push them towards your chest, and at the same time pushing your chin in gently.
2. Slowly bring your right palm up to eye level. Move the palm to the right side; at the same time turn your head gently while looking at the palm. Move back to the front. Then do the other side.



Picture 1

Shoulders

1. Gently roll your shoulders backwards 3 to 5 times.
2. Bring both arms upward and press down. (*see picture 2*)



Picture 2

Spine

1. Bring both hands in front of your chest as though carrying a large beach ball. Then move one palm up toward the ceiling, flat and above the head, the other palm down, flat and against the floor. Don't overextend. (*see picture 3*)
2. Hands in front of your chest as though carrying a ball and turn to one side slowly with knees very slightly bent. Switch hands, then turn to the other side.



Picture 3

Hips

1. Put one foot forward touching down on the heel, moving hands backward for better balance. Then step backward on toes and move hands forward. (*see picture 4*)
2. Bring your arms up. Put one foot to the side while pushing hands to the opposite direction. Come back to the front bringing your foot back. Do the other side.



Picture 4

Knees

1. Bring your fists to your waist. Bend one knee and stretch out to a height comfortable to you, and at the same time let the opposite hand punch forward. Bring your fist back to your waist bending the knee, then put your foot down. Do the other side.
2. Step forward with one foot, bending forward with the foot being straight forward to protect the knee, punching out with the opposite hand. Bring your fist back to your waist and your weight and foot back. Do the other side. (*see picture 5*)



Picture 5

Ankles

With your weight on the back foot and other foot in front, hands behind your back:

1. Tap toes and then heel. Alternate. Change foot.
2. Lightly press the outside of the front of the foot on the ground with the heel slightly up, then lightly press the inside of the foot. Alternate. Change foot.