

BACK STRETCHES

Created by BackTalk SSG (Lauren Leopold, OTDS)



Things to consider

Disclaimer: The following stretches are not scoliosis specific but are stretches that I have found I can still perform despite my scoliosis. These stretches work for myself and my body but please keep in mind that everyone is different; what works for myself may or may not work for you. When starting a new routine, it is advised to consult with your healthcare provider.

How many should I do?

When beginning these stretches, hold the stretch for 5-10 seconds on each side. In the beginning, you may want to start with 1-2 sets to make sure they do not aggravate your muscles or increase pain. As your muscles loosen and you become more comfortable with the stretches, you can increase the amount of time you hold the stretch (15-30 seconds) and/or the amount of sets you perform (3-5 sets). If pain increases, stop the stretch immediately and consult your healthcare provider.

When performing stretches, it is important to maintain proper positioning during the stretch. Most of the following stretches can be performed standing or sitting with your back straight and shoulders relaxed (shoulders should be down, not shrugged up towards your ears).

In addition, remember to continue to breathe through the stretch and do not hold your breath (some people do this unconsciously). Your breathing should be slow and steady; breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth while performing the stretch.

Back stretch

Begin by standing tall with your back straight and shoulders relaxed. Bring both arms up in front of your chest at chest level. Interlock your fingers together with palms facing away from your body. Gently push your hands further away from your chest to deepen the stretch. Hold for 5-30 seconds, return to starting position, and repeat 3-5 times. You should feel this stretch in your upper back and shoulders.

Modification: You can also slightly lean forward to deepen the stretch in your back. Keep your legs and hips in place while only moving your upper body and torso slightly forward.



Latissimus dorsi stretch



Begin by standing or sitting on the edge of a chair with your back straight and shoulders relaxed. Bring both arms over your head and grasp your right wrist with your left hand. Slowly bend to the right until you feel a comfortable stretch along your left side. Hold for 5-15 seconds, return to starting position, and repeat on the left side (remember to switch your hands as well, your right hand should now grasp your left wrist).

Right angle wall stretch

Begin by facing a wall and placing both hands on the wall at shoulder level, shoulder-width apart. Slowly walk your feet backwards while keeping your hands flat on the wall until you feel a comfortable stretch throughout your back. Keep your lower back tucked in by bringing your belly button tucked in towards your spine and keep your arms straight. Hold for 5-30 seconds, return to starting position and repeat 3-5 times. You should feel this stretch along your back as well as your shoulders and hamstrings.



Bird dog stretch



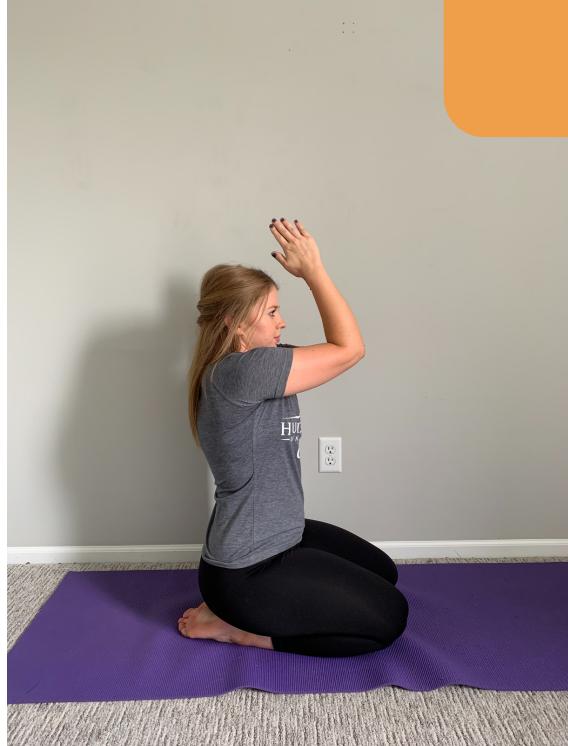
Begin in all 4's on the floor or on your bed. At the same time, slowly lift your right arm to shoulder height and your left leg to hip height. Reach forward with your hand as far as you can and point your toes. Hold this position for ~5-10 seconds, return to starting position, and repeat on the opposite side. This stretch will require some balance and practice but it helps to lengthen the spine and the muscles around the spine.

Up/downward dog

To perform downward facing dog, start in a plank position on the floor with your wrists directly below your shoulders and feet together. Gently use your hands to push your butt and hips up towards the ceiling. Keep your legs as straight as possible but you can slightly bend your knees if needed. Keep your back flat and your head relaxed and faced towards your knees, not looking forward or straight down. Hold for 10-20 seconds. To perform the up dog from this position, push your hips back down towards the ground as far as possible, lift your chest up at the same time and look up towards the ceiling. Hold for 10-20 seconds. Tip: I like to perform these as a set so I will perform the downward facing dog, go into the up dog, back to down, etc. for a total of 3 each.



Praying Mantis



Begin this stretch by standing or sitting tall with your back straight and shoulders relaxed. Bring both arms in front of your chest and press your forearms and palms together. Slowly raise your arms up to feel a comfortable stretch in the muscles around your shoulder blades. Hold this position for 5-30 seconds, go back to starting position, and repeat 3-5 times.

Child's pose

Begin this position in all 4's on the floor (preferably with a mat or towel under your knees for comfort) or on your bed. Knees should be slightly wider than hip-width apart and feet together. Slowly lean back so that you are sitting back on your heels (or as far as you can go without discomfort). At this point, your arms should be extended out in front of you with your head relaxed. To deepen the stretch, gently push your butt closer to your heels and gently press your chest and shoulders closer to the ground. You should feel this stretch in your back but also in your chest, shoulders, hips, and glutes.



Modification:

This stretch can also be performed to target one side of your lower back. Begin in all 4's again and slowly walk your hands to one side. Next, slowly lean back that you are sitting back on your heels (or as far as you can go without discomfort). Your arms should be extended in front of you with your head relaxed. When doing this modification, you should feel an extra stretch on the opposite side; if you walk your hands to the left side, you should feel the stretch more on the right side of your low back and vice versa.



Corner stretch

Begin by standing with your back towards a corner. Bring both arms up to shoulder height so your elbows are barely touching the wall and your hands are in front of your chest. Use both elbows to push against the wall so you push yourself forward away from the wall. Hold this position for 5-10 seconds, return to starting position and repeat 3-5 times.



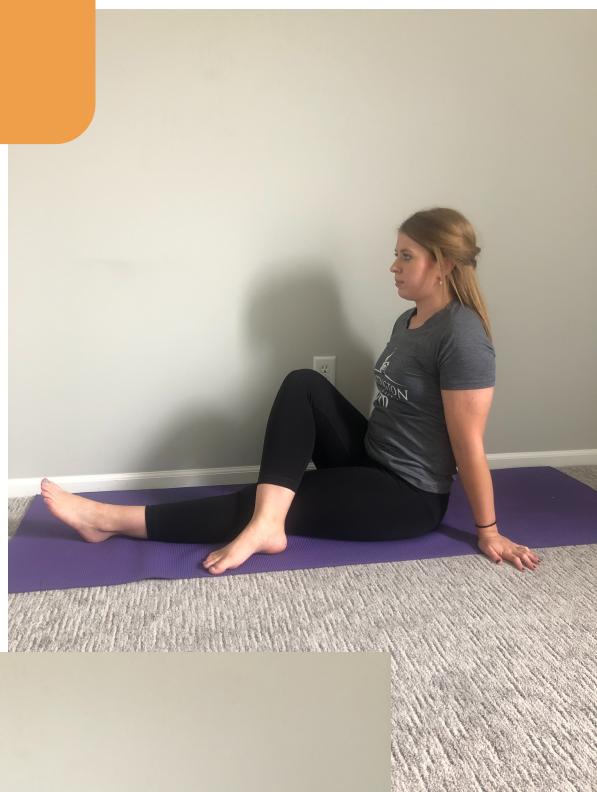
Doorknob stretch



Begin by standing in front of a closed door that had a study doorknob. Reach forward with both hands and grab the doorknob with one hand of the top of the doorknob and one more of the bottom of the doorknob (your arms should be as straight with only a slight bend). Slowly rock your hips back and bring your shoulders/back down. Hold this position for 5-30 seconds, return to starting position, and repeat 3-5 times. You should feel this stretch along your back and shoulders.

Sitting rotational stretch

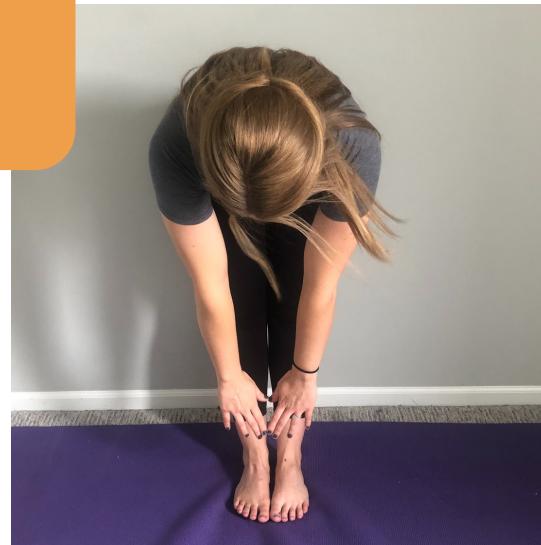
Begin by sitting on the floor with both legs straight out in front of you. Cross the right leg over the left with your knee bent and keep your foot flat on the floor. Wrap the left arm around your right knee and gently twist to the side. Maintain an upright posture with a straight back and relaxed shoulders. Hold this stretch for 5-30 seconds, return to starting position, and repeat on the other side. You should feel this stretch along your obliques (side abdominals), side of your back, hips, and glutes.



Forward bending

Legs together: begin by standing tall with a straight back, shoulders relaxed, and legs/feet together. Bring both arms overhead and slowly bend forward until you feel a comfortable stretch along your back (you will also feel this stretch in your hamstrings). Relax your head and your arms and hold this position for 5-30 seconds. Slowly raise your body back up to return to starting position and repeat 3-5 times.

Legs apart: this stretch will be performed the same as the last one but with your legs apart. Start with an upright posture and bring your legs hip-width apart. For a deeper stretch, you can bring your legs out even further and slightly turn your feet out. Slowly bend forward, relax your head/neck, and hold for 5-30 seconds. Slowly return to starting position and repeat 3-5 times. If you need too you can slightly bend your knees.



Side bending



Begin by standing tall with a straight back and relaxed shoulders with your legs slightly wider than hip-width apart (for a deeper stretch you can spread your legs apart further). With both hands, reach towards your right thigh, knee, or ankle (depending on your own flexibility). You should feel a comfortable stretch along your back, specifically the left side. If you need too, you can slightly bend your knees. Hold this position for 5-30 seconds. Slowly raise your body back up to starting position and repeat to the left side. Repeat this sequence 3-5 times.

Modification: perform the last stretch as described. Next, slowly rotate your body while bringing your left arm straight up towards the ceiling. Hold this position for 5-30 seconds.

References

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