

HAMSTRING STRETCHES

Created by BackTalk SSG (Lauren Leopold, OTDS)



Things to consider

Disclaimer: When starting a new routine, it is advised to consult your healthcare provider. 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.

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.

How are tight hamstrings related to back pain?

Tight hamstrings can actually be a contributor to lower back pain. Tight/shortened hamstrings pull your pelvis forward which in turn pulls the lower spine out of neutral alignment. This can strain the ligaments that surround the vertebrae of your spine and lead to tight hip flexors, glutes, and low back muscles. All of this can contribute to the possibility of increased lower back pain. Keeping these muscles loose and lengthened can avoid any unnecessary stress on your spine and therefore decrease the amount of pain in the back.



Standing hamstring stretch

Begin by standing with your back straight, shoulders relaxed, and legs/feet together or slightly spread apart. Slowly bend forward at the waist (like you are reaching to touch your toes) until you feel a comfortable stretch, letting your arms hang freely. You do not have to touch your toes with this stretch, the goal is to simply bend at the waist within your own comfort level to feel a stretch in the hamstrings and lower back. Hold this position for 5-30 seconds, return to starting position and repeat.



Crossed leg standing stretch

Stand tall with your back straight and shoulders relaxed. Cross your right foot slightly in front of your left and slightly bend your left knee. Place both hands on top of your right thigh and slowly lean forward at the hips while maintaining a straight back. Lean forward until you feel a comfortable stretch in your right hamstring. Hold for 5-10 seconds and repeat 3-5 times on each side.



Supine towel stretch

Lie flat on your back on the floor or on your bed with both legs straight or bent (depending on your comfort level, pain, and flexibility). Grab a long towel (or exercise band) with both hands and place around the bottom of your right foot. Gently pull on the towel to bring your leg up towards the ceiling as far as you can go, you can leave a slight bend in the knee in needed to release pressure on the lower back/hips. Hold this position for 5-30 seconds, return to starting position, and repeat 3-5 times on each side.



Chair stretch

Begin by sitting towards the edge of a sturdy chair with a second chair in front of you. Bring your right leg up onto the chair in front of you. You can simply hold this position for 5-30 seconds if you feel enough of a stretch or you can slightly lean forward at the hips to deepen the stretch. Repeat on both sides 3-5 times.



Seated hamstring stretch

Sit on the floor or on your bed with your right leg extended out in front of you and your left side bent so that the bottom of your foot rests on the inside of your right thigh. Slowly bend forward as though you are reaching for your toes (you do not have to touch your toes, reach forward as far as you can comfortably). Hold this position for 5-30 seconds and repeat 3-5 times on each side.

References

Marcin, A. (2019, June 10). How to treat and prevent tight hamstrings. <https://www.healthline.com/health/tight-hamstring>

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