**Stretches for the Pelvic Floor Muscles**

**Stretching RULES:**

* Stretches should be held for only as long as you are comfortable. Start by performing each stretch (unless noted otherwise) for 10 seconds, then work up to 20 or 30 seconds. Ideally, you’ll want to try to hold for 45 to 60 seconds in a PAIN-FREE stretch. Perform these stretches every other day to begin, then once you feel comfortable with them, you can do them every day.

** Keep your pelvic floor muscles relaxed during all stretches. If possible, perform the Belly Breathing (separate handout) first so you are relaxed.

***Never hold your breath! Belly breathe with each stretch. You should feel a gentle “letting go” in the area you are stretching if doing the exercise correctly. DON’T push too hard!

****Release from each stretch slowly and carefully. If you’ve never stretched begin very slowly. Try doing your stretches after a hot bath or shower.

1. “Labor” Stretch

- Lie on your back
- Draw each leg up towards your chest and hold onto each knee with each hand

- Spread apart your legs as wide as you comfortably can by pulling your knees up and apart with your hands

- Feel the stretch in your perineum, imagine your sitting bones widening apart from each other and your muscles relaxing
- Belly Breathe as you hold the stretch

2. **Knees to Chest Stretch**
- Lie on your back
- Bend one leg and draw it up towards your chest with your hands

   ![Image](https://example.com/image1)


- Feel the stretch in your buttock
- Do this on each side
- Then try bringing both knees up together to feel the stretch in your buttocks and low back
- Belly Breathe to hold the stretch

3. **“Figure 4” Stretch**
- Lie on your back
- Place your feet flat on the floor so that your knees are bent
- Place your left ankle on your right knee or thigh so as to make a 4-shape with your legs

   ![Image](https://example.com/image2)

   ![Image](https://example.com/image3)

- Now raise your right leg and hold onto it with your hands by wrapping your hands around your right thigh

   ![Image](https://example.com/image4)

- By pulling up your right leg, you’ll feel the stretch in your left buttock and hip
- Belly Breathe as you hold the stretch
- Repeat on the other side by switching out your leg positions

4. Groin Stretch
-Lie on your back
-Bend your knees so that the soles of your feet are together and your knees fall outward to each side
-Allow the legs to be pulled outward comfortably (you can place pillows under each knee if you need to)
-Note: this photo shows a bolster positioned under the back, this is optional

[Image of a person lying on their back with knees bent and legs pulled outward, supported by pillows]

-Feel the stretch in the inner thighs
-Belly Breathe as you hold the stretch
-This can be done sitting up too

[Image of a person sitting on the floor with legs bent and hands behind back]

5. **Trunk Twist Stretch**
- Lie on your back
- Stretch out your arms to each side to make a “T”
- Take your right hand and grab your left knee and bring it slowly across your body towards the floor
- Keep your left arm outstretched to counter balance
- You'll feel a rotation stretch in your spine
- Breathe thru the stretch
- Repeat on the other side

![Trunk Twist Stretch Image]


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6. **Hamstring Stretch on the Wall**
- Lie on your back near a wall.
- Draw your knees to your chest
- Position yourself so that your butt is near the wall and scoot your butt as close to the wall as you can
- Slowly straighten one leg out and place it so that the heel is resting on the wall, if you can. Don't forcefully straighten the knee. Then try to place the other leg up as in picture.
- If stretching both is too difficult, then do just one leg at a time, while the resting leg is bent out of the way.
- Breathe into the stretch behind the leg

**Note:** This photo shows props under the back. Do NOT place anything under your back, as pictured, keep your back flat against the floor.

![Hamstring Stretch on the Wall Image]

7. Side Trunk Stretch
-Sit on the floor with both legs bent toward the right side, this will cause a small stretch on your left sidebody

-Raise your left arm up in the air and bend slowly towards the right to increase the stretch on your left side
- Belly Breathe into your left sidebody
- Repeat on the other side

8. “Z” Stretch
- Start by sitting on the floor with the soles of your feet together
- Then place your right leg behind you, keep your left leg in the same position
- You’ll make a “Z” with your legs
- Keep your back straight by placing your hands on your knees
- Belly Breathe for the stretch
- Repeat in the other direction

From Ending Female Pain: A Woman’s Manual, by Isa Herrera MSPT, CSCS. Duplex Pub, NY 2009
9. Hip Flexor Stretch
- Stand with your feet about hip width apart
- Have a chair nearby for balance or hold onto the wall
- With your left foot, take a “giant” step forward so that you are in a long stride stance
- Ensure your hip bones and toes are pointing straight forward on each foot
- Adjust the length of the step for your own tightness level
- Bend your left knee like you are lunging forward a bit
- Don’t strain your knee by lunging too far
- Keep your pelvis tucked a bit like a “bad dog” and this will ensure you’ll feel the stretch in the front of the right hip
- Belly Breathe thru the stretch
- Repeat on each side

10. Side Body Stretch
- Stand with your feet together or hip width apart
- Place your left hand on your hip and raise your right hand up high
- Staying straight and not twisting, stretch your right sidebody by reaching with that right hand

- Take a breath or two in this position and repeat it if you can
- Switch sides

**11. Belly Stretch**

- Standing
- Place your palms on the small of your back
- Stretch your body upwards first and imagine you are making space for each back bone

- After you have elongated your spine gently arch backwards until you feel a little stretch in your tummy muscles

- Take one nice breath and return to the middle
- Do this a few times if your back feels OK

12. Child’s Pose
- Be on the floor on your hands and knees and then tuck and lower yourself down so that your butt comes down toward your heels and your hands slide forward so that your head approaches the floor, your knees should be separated about 1 foot apart
- Gently reach your arms out forward to feel a nice stretch in your back and trunk

- Then reach out to the right to feel the stretch on your left

- Breathe with this position
- Switch to reach to the left