STRETCHING/FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES

For exercises done in a sitting position, use a straight-back armless chair. Sit up tall with your back pressed against the chair for support. Your feet should be flat on the floor, about shoulder width apart.

Torso Stretch

Purpose: Stretch the midsection (waist).
Starting Position: Sit tall with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
Action:
• Place hands behind your head, as shown, with elbows out to the side. You can also cross your arms over your body or leave them at your sides, whichever is most comfortable.
• Bend your body to one side, bending at the waist. Keep your head facing forward.
• Return to starting position. Repeat on the other side.
Repeat: 6 to 8 times on each side.

Torso Twist

Purpose: Stretch the midsection (waist).
Starting Position: Sit tall with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder width apart.
Action:
• Place hands behind your head, as shown, with elbows out to the side. You can also cross your arms over your body or leave them at your sides, whichever is most comfortable.
• Twist your body to one side so you face the side wall. Your head should follow your body as you turn. Be sure to twist from your waist.
• Return to starting position. Repeat on the other side.
Repeat: 6 to 8 times on each side.

Neck Stretches

Purpose: Neck flexibility
Starting Position: Sitting tall; feet flat on the floor, shoulder width apart.
Action:
• Turn your head to look over your shoulder. Keep your back against the chair and your shoulders facing forward.
• Return to starting position. Repeat on other side.
Repeat: 6 to 8 times on each side.
Calf Stretch

Purpose: Stretch the calf (lower part of the back of the leg).

Starting position: Lean against a wall with both palms flat against the wall and your arms straight.

Action:
- Bend one leg, and place the foot on the ground in front of you. The other leg extends behind you with the knee slightly bent. Both feet point straight ahead.
- Slowly move your hips forward, keeping your lower back flat. Be sure that the heel of your back foot is flat on the floor, and your weight is in your back heel.
- Hold for two to three seconds.
- Return to starting position. Repeat.
- Complete one set and then work the other leg.

Repeat: 6 to 8 times with each leg.

Quadriceps Stretch

Purpose: Stretch quadriceps muscle (front of thigh) and strengthen hamstring on back of thigh.

Starting position: Stand with your left side to the wall, 12 to 18 inches from the wall. Place your left hand against the wall for balance, keeping that arm slightly bent.

Action:
- Raise your right heel towards your buttocks. Reach back with your right hand and grab your foot at the heel, ankle or sock. If you cannot reach your foot, grab your pant leg or just raise your foot as high as you can and still feel comfortable.
- Hold for two to three seconds. Be sure you are standing tall and looking straight ahead. Your knee should be pointing toward the floor and your ankle should be in a straight line with your leg, not twisted to the side.
- Let go of your foot and slowly return to starting position. Then repeat.
- Complete one set and then turn around and hold wall with right hand when working left leg.

Note: Keep your standing leg slightly bent for better balance and to avoid injury. Stand tall and avoid leaning over.

Repeat: 6 to 8 times with each foot.
Seated March

Purpose: Increase hip flexibility.
Starting Position: Sit tall with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder width apart.
Action:
• Raise one knee as high as you comfortably can.
• Return to starting position. Repeat on the other side.
Repeat: March 12 to 16 times (6 to 8 times per leg).

Hamstring Stretch

Purpose: Stretch hamstring (back of thigh).
Starting Position: Stand with your left side to the wall, 12 to 18 inches from the wall. Place your left hand against the wall for balance, keeping that arm slightly bent.
Action:
• Place your left heel on the floor in front of you. Lean forward from your hip (not your waist).
• Push your hip back and reach toward your toe with your right hand. Your foot can be pointing up (as shown) or flat on the floor, whichever is more comfortable for you. Make sure to keep your shoulders and back straight as you reach forward.
• Hold for two to three seconds.
• Return to starting position. Then, repeat.
• Complete one set and then turn around and work the other leg.
Repeat: 6 to 8 times with each leg.