

White Birch School of Tai Chi Exercise Program



This Program Developed by
Sifu Jan Collins and
Sifu Larry Vincent

WARNING

Before starting any exercise or weight loss plan, be sure to **consult your physician**. The material contained in this document is based purely on the observations, education, and experience of the authors. No warranty or claim is made, implied or intended that any part of this material is right for or will work for everyone. If you choose to act upon the information contained here, you do so at your own risk and upon your own responsibility.

Weekly Tai Chi Practice Exercise Program

It is my experience that more than 70% of the people who enroll in a martial arts program do so to improve their level of fitness. To help students meet this goal; Sifu Larry Vincent and I have put together this booklet. Larry and I trained together under the able teaching of Sifu Robert LaPointe, director of White Birch School Traditional Martial Arts in Arlington Virginia. Along with his proficiency in Yang Style Tai Chi, Larry has a second level black belt ranking in Tien Shan Pai Kung Fu.

In 1997 both Larry and I decided to open our own White Birch Schools. When we started to make plans for our schools we realized that many of our students would be looking for a well-defined, comprehensive fitness program that they could use in their daily lives to help them meet their fitness goals. Even though there are many well thought out fitness plans available to the general public none of them met all of the requirements for a good well rounded program that would help people advance in their tai chi training. So we developed the material contained within these pages.

This comprehensive workout program will help you to gain the level of flexibility and strength that you want to achieve. The amount of time it takes for **you** to meet **your** objectives is solely dependent on how diligent **you** are in **your** practice.

It is said that variety is the spice of life. The benefits of varying your daily routine are that you will not get bored, you can use a shorten routine on the days that you don't have as much time, and the muscles that you stretch heavily one day can rest the next.

If your objective includes improving your Tai Chi form as well as improving your fitness level then you must keep current on your training. This means that you should attend Tai Chi class on a regular basis. Following is a breakdown of the activities in the program and the minimum amount of time you should spend on each.

- Chi Kung - 5 minutes
- Tai Chi - ~~20~~ 10 minutes
- Joint Rotation - 5 minutes
- Tai Chi Warm-ups - 5 minutes
- Tai Chi Posture Practice - 10 minutes
- Tai Chi Stances and Leg Building - 15 minutes
- Aerobic Activity and Stretching - 30 minutes
- Relaxation/warm-down - 10 minutes

PLEASE NOTE there should be no pain associated with any of the activities in this program. If you experience pain doing any of the exercises, especially the stretching either don't do them or do them with less vigor.

Following is a suggested weekly fitness routine - time needed to complete all activities just about 1 hour. Complete the tai chi form practice on the days that you do not come to class - that way you can practice the new postures you learned in class as well as correct the old ones.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
chi kung	chi kung	chi kung	chi kung	chi kung	chi kung	chi kung
Joint rotation		Joint rotation		Joint rotation		
Posture practice		Posture practice		Posture practice		
	tai chi form		tai chi form		tai chi form	
Aerobic stretch		Aerobic stretch		Aerobic stretch		
	Stance / Leg building		Stance / Leg building		Stance / Leg building	
relaxation	relaxation	relaxation	relaxation	relaxation	relaxation	relaxation

A) Chi Kung: Chi Kung translated into English means "Breath Work". It is the basis of all martial arts and the healing arts such as Yoga and Reiki. It is said that the practice of Chi Kung has been ongoing since 2400 BCE – give or take a year this way or that, it means that Chi Kung has been around for about 4400 years. Tai Chi is considered to be a moving Chi Kung.

I recommend that you practice Chi Kung first thing in the morning when the air is the cleanest. And again before going to bed to help you clear your mind of the days activities.

To begin place your feet shoulder width apart. Let your arms hang loosely at your sides, relax your shoulders, bend your knees slightly, keep your back straight, your head up, and chin tucked in. Close your eyes and be still for 15 seconds. Concentrate on your breathing, if your mind wanders bring your thoughts back to your breathing.

When you do Chi Kung you breathe in and out through your nose. The tongue is placed on the roof of your mouth just behind the front teeth. When you breathe in push your stomach out slightly, on the out breath pull your stomach in. This type of breathing is called "natural" breathing – breathing in this fashion increases the amount of oxygen you bring into your body by about 40%. For some people this extra amount of oxygen makes them feel a little faint – if at any time you feel faint **stop** the breathing exercise and sit down for a minute. When you feel better then begin again.

Wu Chi

Start with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands loosely hanging at your sides, knees bent slightly. As you breathe in move your hands in a circular fashion, out to the sides and slightly forward until the arms are parallel to the floor, palms up. Keep the elbows still and continue to circle the hands until the fingers are facing each other at eye level.

As you breathe out press the hands down to waist level, palms down. Continue without stopping for 2 to 5 minutes - breathe in and out as slowly as you can without straining.

Peng Yue - Holding the Moon

Start with the feet shoulder width apart - hands at your sides, palms inward. Bring the hands toward your Dan Tien (about 1 and 1/2 inches below your navel), palms up – fingers of both hands facing each other, until your hands are about two inches apart.

As you breath in - raise your hands up to chest height, turn hands out and over, palms push up towards the heavens holding up the moon. As you breath out - Pull hands away from each other and slowly bring them down in a gentle arc to

your Dan Tien - palms up. Continue without stopping for 2 to 5 minutes. Breathe in and out as slowly as you can without straining.

Fen Yuan - Parting the Clouds

Start with the left leg forward, right leg back - hands are at mid chest height - palms together, close to body, fingers point forward --- WEIGHT is 70 % on back leg in a reverse Bow Stance (back leg bent -- forward leg straight). As you breath out - move weight forward into a forward Bow Stance (70% of weight on front foot with front knee bent - back leg is straight) - hands stay together as you push them forward.

As you breath in - move weight back into the reverse bow stance separate the hands, palms turning out to the side, and then return to the start position. Continue without stopping for 1 to 2 minutes and switch your feet and repeat.

Eight Pieces of Brocade - this Chi Kung was develop in the 12th century and is easily the most practice one in the world today. Almost every Chi Kung and Tai Chi school teaches a version of this old and much loved classic.

Form 1. Propping Up the Sky - Complete form 5 times

Start with feet shoulder width apart - hands at the sides, palms facing in. Bring your hands to your navel palms facing up. Raise the hands up to chin level. Turn the palms when they pass by your face, look upward and raise your heels. Return to the starting pose by lowering the arms sideways as you lower your heels to the ground. **Inhale while lifting hands and exhale while lowering them.**

Form 2. Drawing the Bow - Complete form 5 times to each side

Move the feet two shoulder widths apart. Lift your hands to chest level, forearms crossed, and palms facing in, left hand on inside. Stretch out the left arm to the side with the hand in the "secret sword" position (index and middle finger points forward). At the same time make a fist with the right hand and draw the elbow to the right side as if you were drawing the string of a bow. Bend your knees and lower yourself until your thighs are parallel to the floor (horse stance). Repeat this movement to the other side. **Inhale when drawing the bow and exhale as you return to the starting pose.** Remember to center your weight and keep your back straight.

Form 3. Raise Hands and Hold Up the Sky - Complete form 5 times on each side

Start with feet shoulder width apart. Stand in a relaxed manner keeping your back straight, head up. Lift your hands to chest level with palms facing up. From this position turn the left palm towards the sky, fingers facing the rear and press the hand upward while pressing the right hand downward. Return to the starting position and repeat 5 times, then reverse hands and complete 5 times with right

hand up. Stretch entire body. **Inhale while lifting the arm towards the sky and exhale while lowering the arm back to starting position.**

Form 4. Looking Over the Shoulders - Complete form 10 times

Start with feet shoulder width apart. Lift your left arm around the front of your face and place your left hand on your upper back between your shoulder blades. Place the right hand as high as you can on your back – palm in. Turn the waist to the right and look over your shoulder at the left heel. Return to the starting pose and complete movement to the left side. Turn at the hips and don't strain your shoulders or neck - but be sure to look over the shoulder on each movement. Complete the form 5 times to each side. **Breathe naturally.**

Form 5. Sit On Horse with Tightly Clenched Fists - Complete form 10 times

Start with feet two shoulder widths apart and move into a horse stance. Place hands at waist height and tightly clench both fists, palms up. As you punch forward with the right fist turn your hand over so that the palm is turned down. As you bring the fist back to the starting position turn the hand back to start position. Repeat with left hand. Clench your teeth tightly and keep your eyes opened wide as if you were angry. Grip the ground firmly with your toes. **Inhale when withdrawing the fist and exhale when punching**

Form 6. Child Bows to the Buddha - Complete form 5 times

Start with your feet 3 or 4 inches apart. Bring your hands up to chest level, fingers pointing up, and palms together. Open hands up as you push them outward and lift your arms over your head, lean back so that you are looking up to the sky. Bend at the hips as you lean forward (be sure to keep your arms close to your ears as you bend forward) and grasp your toes with your hands. Pull your toes and keep your legs straight. **Inhale while leaning backward and exhale while bending down.** (**NOTE:** Start with your feet far enough apart so that you can reach your toes).

Form 7. Swaying Hands and Hips

Start with your feet about 4 feet apart. Bend at the hips and allow your hands to touch the floor. Let your arms hang naturally and relax the shoulders. First roll the shoulders gently in opposite directions, right back and the left forward - then reverse the movement. Second, move the hands so that they are about 12 inches apart, palms facing each other. Next swing the hands gently to the right while the swaying the hips to the left – reverse direction. **Breathe naturally.**

Form 8. Lift Head High Towards the Stars

Stand at ease arms at your side. Place the feet about 6 - 8 inches apart, lift your heels and raise your body - hold for 5 seconds. Lower the heels slowly - repeat 3 times. Next place your hands on your hips and lift your heels and raise your body - hold for 5 seconds. Lower the heels slowly - repeat 3 times. Finally hold your hands at chest level, palms up, lift your heels and raise your body - hold for

5 seconds. Lower the heels slowly - repeat 3 times. **Inhale while lifting the heels and exhale while lowering them.**

Jim's Form

Start with your feet about 12 inches apart. Place your hands, palms in over your navel. As you breathe in raise your hands above your head. As you breathe out separate your hands and slowly bring them towards your hips in a graceful arc – when the hands are parallel with the floor open and close the fingers 2 or 3 times until the hands are back to the starting position.

As you breathe in raise your hands above your head again. As you breathe out separate your hands and slowly bring them towards your hips in a graceful arc, allow the hands to pass each other until they are about shoulder height.

As you breathe in reverse the arc until the backs of the hands touch each other above your head - bring the feet together.

As you breathe out bend your knees and bring your hands straight down and behind you.

As you breathe in straighten your knees and bring your hands up to chest height, palms out.

As you breathe out press the hands outwards until your arms are straight - move the feet about 12 inches apart as you press the hands forward.

As you breathe in turn your palms towards your chest and bring your chi back towards you.

As you breathe out press your hands down to waist level and then bring your palms back to the starting position – palms in over the navel.

Breathe as slowly and smoothly as is comfortable. Repeat at least 2 more times.

B) Joint Rotations:

TAI CHI WARM-UPS

Exercise 1a - 5 times

Exercise 1b - 5 times to each side

Exercise 2 - Alternate sides complete at least 3 on each side

Exercise 3 - 3 times to each side - hold each for 5 seconds, work up to 15

Exercise 4 - 5 times minimum for each side - work up to 10

Exercise 5a - 5 times to each side

Exercise 5b - 5 times

Exercise 5c - Hold for 15 seconds on each side

Exercise 6 - loosen up knees, ankles, wrists, and elbows

Exercise 7a - 10 times forward and 10 times backward each arm

Exercise 7b - 5 times

Exercise 8 - 5 times

Exercise 9 - 5 times

Exercise 10 - for at least 15 seconds

TAI CHI WARM-DOWNS

1. Place feet shoulder width apart. Shake your arms and hands with vigor while bouncing up and down gently on your toes.
2. Complete 3 neck rolls in each direction.
3. Bend at the hips and touch the floor with both hands. Trace floor from the right heel to the left heel – come up and do a slight back bend so that you are looking at the ceiling. Rotate your body so that the hands move from your left side to the right side. Bend at the hips and touch the floor again with both hands. Repeat the movements on the right side. After 4th completion of the movement place your hands palms together near the floor (back is still bent).
4. From the position above keep your hands together while you straighten up. Rub your palms together vigorously until your hands are very warm. Place the hands over your eyes and allow the heat to warm your face.
5. Move your hands to the top of your head and massage your scalp for 15 seconds.
6. Move your hands to the back of your neck and using your index finger tap the muscles lightly 36 times. Then rub the neck and shoulder muscles.
7. Move the hands to the small of your back. Make a fist and gently rub the muscles. Make a fist and lightly tap the back muscles 36 times.
8. Allow your arms to drop to your sides. Relax the arms completely. Rotate your waist to the left and swing the right arm up and the left arm back. As you rotate your waist to the right and swing the left arm up and the right arm back. Repeat movement 5 to 10 times on each side.

C) Tai Chi Form Practice: Each day focus on one of the Tai Chi principles listed below. Then at the end just "do" the form, don't worry about where your feet and hands are or the timing - just breathe and relax.

1. Back straight
2. Level height
3. Separate weight
4. Hands and feet coordinate
5. Heel and toe alignment
6. Movement is from the ground up
7. Hip and shoulder alignment
8. Continuity
9. Attitude
10. Eyes follow the intention
11. Six gates open
12. Circularity

Students should practice Tai Chi every day. Work on improving the things that your teacher brought to your attention in your last class. And don't forget to practice all of your form - your sifu will expect that section 1 will improve as you learn other sections. If you live near another student see if you can practice together. This will make it more fun and you can help each other with the form, push hands, and applications.

D) Tai Chi Posture Practice:

Press, Single Whip and Push

Do this stance as low as you can - forward bent knee should stay above the ankle, the back leg should remain straight with the heel on the ground. Keep your back straight and head up.

- A) Press (Chi)** - Left foot forward. Left arm and right hand in Chi position (left arm bent, hand at chest level, palm facing in, press fingers of right hand on left wrist, right elbow points toward floor). Hold for 15 seconds.
- B) Single Whip** - From the position above - circle right hand down and to the back, to about a 45-degree angle. Make a crane hand with the right hand - all fingers touching the thumb as you turn left hand 90 degrees with fingers pointing up. Hold for 15 seconds.
- C) Push (An)** - From the position above - circle right hand down and forward until it is just behind and to the side of the left hand - both palms face outward. As you move into a reverse bow position the toes of the right foot come up, the hands move slightly upward and back to just in front on your shoulders. The legs remain still as you slowly drop the hands to waist level. Next, press the hips forward, moving into a bow stance while at the same time pressing the hands forward and up until they are just below shoulder level. Repeat An 10 times.

Change stance and complete A - C above on the other side.

Tai Chi Walk

Start with feet in a bow stance - left foot forward, hands on the hips, weight forward on the left foot. Rock back (weight moves to the back leg), turn the waist and left foot to the left, transfer your weight from the back foot to the front foot. Slowly bring the right foot up and lightly touch the instep of the left foot with the right toe then slowly place the right foot forward in a bow stance. Repeat on the right side. Do this 10 times up the floor - and 10 times back down the floor. Stay low, keep your height level, back straight, eyes follow your intention - keep your head up don't look at your feet.

Parting the Wild Horses Mane: Repeat 10 times then change leg position and repeat on the other side. Start with the weight on the right foot, toes of left foot near the instep of right foot, hands in hold the ball position - left hand on bottom. As you step forward with the left foot into a forward bow stance the left hand comes up to chin height while the right hand comes down to rest near the right hip. The palms of the hands pass each other much like pulling taffy or brushing the mane of a horse. Be sure to rotate the waist and don't rotate outside your tai chi circle.

From the position above - keep the knees bent and move the left foot and the hands back to the starting position.

Brush Knee Push

Start with weight on right foot; place left foot with toes near the instep of the right foot. Turn waist and shoulders slightly to the right; place the right arm in line with right shoulder to the rear, palm up. Place the left arm in line with the right arm - palm down. The palms should be at the same level.

Start the movement by circling the left hand, palm down as if to block a kick, and bring it to rest palm down at the left hip. As the hand comes to rest at the hip, step forward and to the left with the left leg - at the same time bend the right elbow so that the hand moves towards the ear. Note the hand and the heel should arrive at the same time - weight should still be on the RIGHT foot in a reverse bow stance.

Next move your weight from the back foot to the front foot as you "push" the right hand forward, fingers flexed, palm down until you are in a forward bow stance.

Rock back, turn the waist and left foot to the left. The left hand circles back and up and the right hand circles up and back while the right foot moves up to the instep of the left foot (you should be the mirror image of the starting position.)

Complete 10 times up the floor and repeat 10 times back down the floor.

Walking Clouds

Start in a horse stance with the hands in hold the ball position - left hand on the bottom. Hands move in a circular fashion, right hand to the right and down, left hand to left and up.

As the hands start to move, move the left foot next to the right foot - the left foot should arrive as the hands come back into the hold the ball position, right hand at the bottom. Hands continue to circle, step to the right with the right foot then bring in the left foot - left foot arrives as the hands come back into hold the ball. Continue for a total of 10 times. Reverse direction - hands start with right hand on bottom. Back straight, keep your knees bent throughout the movement to assure that your height stays level.

E) Stances: (for strengthening leg muscles - select from the list below - at least once a week do the temple stance routine)

Horse Stance - start with holding position for 15 seconds - work up to 60 seconds - complete 3 times

1. Place feet two shoulder widths apart - bend knees so that the thighs are parallel to the floor - toes point straight ahead. Place arms in tree hugging position about chest high palms facing in - hold for 15 seconds
2. Pull your self back to starting position by using the leg muscles and not just by straightening the legs - shake out your legs. Repeat.

The Lower Leg

1. Move feet about 8 inches apart, feet point straight ahead. Raise up yours heels and then lower them slowly - do this 10 times.
2. Move feet about 12 inches apart and point toes out. Raise up yours heels and then lower them slowly - do this 10 times.
3. Leave toes in same position and point HEELS out. Raise up yours heels and then lower them slowly - do this 10 times.
4. Move heels back until the feet are pointing straight ahead. Rock back on heels raising the toes 10 times.

Empty Stance - start by holding stance for 15 seconds on each side - work up to 30 seconds.

Stand with **all** your weight on your right leg, foot turned slightly out - bend the knee. Place left leg so that the toes are lightly touching the floor about one foot (more if you can) in front of the right leg and slightly to the left of center, heel out and knee in.

Place your left hand at eye height, palm facing out. The right hand is held at waist level with the palm facing down to protect the groin area from a well-placed kick. Keep your back straight and look forward not down. Hold for 15 seconds. Repeat on other side.

Bow Stance - start by holding stance for 15 seconds on each side - work up to 30 seconds

Start with feet shoulder width apart - step forward with your left foot - left knee is bent right leg is straight. Left hand is held palm out, away from the face, at about eye level - right hand is held palm down at the right knee. 70% of your weight is on front foot. **KEEP** your back straight; left knee stays above the left ankle. Hold stance for 15 seconds - then reverse stance with the right leg forward.

Kneel Stance – Hold position for 15 seconds.

Position your feet as in tai chi warm-up number four. Left foot forward, knee bent but not beyond the ankle – right leg bent so that knee is 1 inch above the floor. Place your hands on your hips. Keep your back straight. Repeat on opposite leg.

Twist Stance – Hold position for 10 seconds

Left foot first. Hands on hips, bend the left knee, place the toes of the right foot just behind the left heel lightly touching the floor for balance. Keep your back straight. Repeat on opposite leg.

Temple Stances - Start with holding the two legged stances (e.g., Horse Stance - 10 seconds) for twice as long as the one legged stances (e.g. Twist Stance - 5 seconds). When your legs get strong hold the stances for 20 and 10 seconds.

1. Horse stance facing north
2. Turn your torso to the west, legs don't move
3. Turn your torso to the east, left leg turns in, right leg stays the same
4. Step to the north with the left into a left kneel stance
5. Step to the east with the right into a right kneel stance
6. Step up with the left foot into a horse stance, facing east
7. Turn to the left into a left twist stance
8. Turn to the right into a right twist stance
9. Step with left into a horse stance facing west
10. Turn to the north into a right empty stance (right leg in front)
11. Step to the east with the right foot into a left empty stance
12. Step to the west with the left foot into a deep bow stance
13. Turn to the east into a right bow stance
14. Horse stance facing north

F) Aerobic: 5 to 10 minutes minimum - Choose activities from list below:

Jab Punches

From a fighting stance, punch out with your front hand and retract. Keep punching for 10 times on each side. Concentrate on the actions of the elbows, shoulders, and rotating your trunk into the punch.

Reverse Punches

From a fighting stance, punch out with your rear hand and retract -10 punches on each side. Concentrate on the rotation of the torso and the actions of the elbows and shoulders.

Combo - Jab / Reverse

From a fighting stance, punch out with your front hand and retract. Punch out with your rear hand and retract. Repeat 10 times - then switch feet.

Upper Cuts

From a fighting stance, bend elbows and strike upwards; chin high, first with front hand then with rear hand. Do for 30 seconds then switch feet and complete on other side.

Front Knee Raises

From a fighting stance, raise your front knee as if in a strike. Lift your knee as high as possible for 10 times on each side. Concentrate on the actions of the hip joint and iliopsoa muscles.

Back Leg Snap Kicks

From a fighting stance, gently kick with the back leg towards the front in a snapping motion. Gently raise the kicking height to maximize the resistance of the hamstring muscles. Complete exercise for 10 times on each side. Concentrate on the stretching action of the hamstrings and the actions of the hip joint.

Front Leg Snap Kicks

Stand with Right foot forward. From a fighting stance, raise the right knee; point the toes, kick upwards striking with the shoelaces, place right foot back in the starting position. Do this 5 times on each side.

Reverse/Jab/Front Kick Snap Kick

Stand with right foot forward. Complete a reverse punch with rear hand, jab with front hand, and then complete a front snap kick. Do this 10 times on each side.

Kicks from the Bar

Hold onto bar or chair with right hand

(A) Swing left leg forward and back 10 times - hold left hand head high in front of you and try to kick it with the left foot

(B) Swing left leg up to the side 10 times - toes pointing forward not up - left hand on hip.

- (C) Face the bar and hold on with both hands. Bring your right knee up to chest level and then extend leg to the rear as high as possible, toes pointed down, press the heel towards the back to stretch leg muscles – hold for 2 seconds. Bring knee back to the chest - repeat 10 times.
- (D) Hold onto bar with right hand – raise the left knee towards chest and slowly kick to the side – hold leg parallel to floor for 10 seconds then lower leg. Repeat once more with right leg then complete twice with opposite leg.

REPEAT A, B, and C above with opposite leg.

Stretch Kick 1 – complete 10 kicks

Stand with your feet together. Place the right hand near your left hip make a fist palm up. Place the left hand slightly behind the left hip, make a fist, palm towards body.

First the hands - bring right hand to eye level, palm out, forearm parallel to floor, and then circle the hand to slightly behind the right hip. After the right hand has passed the head the left fist comes up to eye level, palm towards the face, then move the hand to hip level, palm up. Hands are now in the start position on the opposite side. The right hand blocks a blow, the left hand is called a hammer strike.

Now the feet - step forward with the right foot at the same time as your start to block with the right hand. After the left hand has passed the face complete a rear leg snap kick, shoelaces up, then bring the left foot down and place it next to the right foot.

Bob and Weave

Start in a horse stance. Move the hands near the face and make a fist. Bob down and to the left - then Bob up, jab with right hand and allow right heel to come off the floor. Bob down and then to the right - Bob up, jab with left hand and allow left heel to come off the floor. Repeat for one minute.

G) Stretching: Hold each stretch for 15 seconds – It is important that your muscles be sufficiently warmed up before doing any stretching. Therefore, complete the joint rotation and tai chi warm-ups and at least 5 minutes of the aerobic activities before beginning any of these stretches. Do the stretches in the order listed. Alternate programs 1, 2 and 3.

Stretching Program 1:

Lower Back

Low Back Pain Relief

Lie on your back, bend knees and place soles of feet on ground. Place hands behind head. Breathe in deeply, tighten stomach muscles and press small of back into floor - hold for 10 seconds - slowly breathe out while releasing stomach muscles. Repeat twice more.

Single Leg Pelvic Tilt

Lie on your back with your right leg flat against the floor. Raise your left, bent leg to your chest holding behind your knee. Gently apply pressure. Hold for a minimum of 15 seconds then switch legs.

Bent Leg Trunk Rotators

Lie on your back and raise your bent knees towards the sky. Lay both arms straight out to your sides. Twist your lower body laying your bent legs to the side. Try to keep your shoulders on the floor. Hold for a minimum of 15 seconds for each side.

Cat Arch

Turn over onto your hands and knees. Gently arch your back upwards as far as possible - hold for 15 seconds. Dip back gently downwards as far as possible - hold for 15 seconds. Repeat.

Swan Back

Lay down on your stomach, take a breath or two and allow the back muscles to relax. Place your hands next to your shoulders, lift up chest and head and look at ceiling. Do not push with your hands; lift with your stomach and back muscles. Hold position for 15 seconds.

Child's Pose

From position above - sit back on your heels and stretch your hands forward on the floor until your forehead is on the floor. Slowly stretch your spine forward placing your chest on the floor, keep your buttocks on your heels - hold for 15 seconds. Come back up on your hands and knees.

Gluteals

Bent Leg Trunk Rotator with Assist

Lie on your back with your right leg flat on the floor, your left arm out to your side, and lift your left knee to your chest. Twist your lower body and place your left, bent leg across your body onto the floor. Use your right hand to apply gentle pressure on your bent knee. Keep your left arm and shoulder on the floor. Hold for a minimum of 15 seconds for each side.

Glute Stretch

Right leg straight and on the floor. Bend your left leg and bring your left foot up and grasp it with your right hand. Use your left arm to gently cradle your left knee. Gently pull your bent left leg as a unit towards your right shoulder. Care should be taken so that there is no pressure on the knee and tension should be felt in the gluteus maximus. If no stretch is felt, raise the foot slightly towards the ceiling and pull again. Hold for a minimum of 15 seconds for each side.

Seated Glute Stretch

Sit with your left leg extended. Place your right foot on the left side of your left knee. Curl your left leg underneath you, sit up straight and hug your right knee. Let loose of knee and then gently stretch by lowering your chest as close as possible towards the left side of your right foot. Hold for a minimum of 15 seconds for each side.

Calves / Achilles Tendon

Soleus Stretch

Sit on the floor with your right leg straight. Bend your left leg and rest your heel on the floor. Use your muscles to pull your toes back towards your knee for 10 seconds - provide gentle assistance at the end of the stretch by grasping your foot with both hands for 5 seconds. **Point toes for a three count.**

Achilles Tendon Stretch

Sit on the floor with your right leg straight. Bend your left leg with your foot as close to your butt as possible. Use your muscles to pull your toes back towards your knee for 10 seconds - provide gentle assistance at the end of the stretch by grasping your upper foot with both hands for 5 seconds. **Point toes for a three count.**

Gastrocnemius Stretch

Sit on the floor with your right leg straight. Slightly bend your left leg. Use your muscles to pull your toes back towards your knee for 10 seconds - provide gentle assistance at the end of the stretch by grasping your upper foot with your right hand for 5 seconds. **Point toes for a three count.**

Complete stretches on the other side.

Quadriceps

Psoas Stretch

Lie on your left side with weight on your elbow - holding up your head with your hand. With your right hand grasp your right ankle. Pull your bent right leg behind you using your hand to gently assist the stretch at the end of the movement. Hold for a minimum of 15 seconds for each leg.

Quad Stretch

Lying on your left side, bend both legs. With your left hand grasp your left knee and pull your bent left leg to your chest. With your right hand reach behind you and grasp your right ankle and pull your bent right leg behind you. Hold for a minimum of 15 seconds.

Groin / Adductors

Butterfly Stretch

Seated, bring both feet in towards your groin, sole to sole, as close as possible and grasp your ankles. Use your elbows to help gently push your knees down. Keep your back straight, lower your chest forward, keeping your back straight. Hold for a minimum of 15 seconds.

Hamstring

Standing Split Leg Stretch

Place the right foot forward and move into a deep bow stance, keep your hands on your hips, press the hips forward - make sure that the right knee stays above the right ankle - stretch the chin upwards keeping the head high and the back straight. Hold for 15 seconds. Switch legs.

Leg-in Hurdler's Stretch – in four parts

1. Seated, place your left leg straight out in front of you. Bend your right knee and lay your right leg in front of you so that your right foot rests inside your left upper leg. Bend forward from the hips, being careful not to arch your back. Raise your head and look out over your toes. Try to touch your chest to your knee. Hold for a minimum of 15 seconds on each side.
2. Come up and place right hand near right knee and left hand near left knee. Press gently forward from the hips.
3. Raise up turn the waist to the right and place the left hand on the floor behind the right knee. Do not strain the neck or shoulders, this is a torso stretch.
4. Come up and extend the left arm, palm up, towards the center. Raise the right arm above your head, crook of the elbow near your ear. Stretch to the left so that your right hand touches the toes of your left foot.

Reverse legs and complete 1 through 4 above.

Split Leg Stretch and Front Stretch

Spread your legs out to the sides as far as you can - toes point up. Sit up high and stretch to the left. Reach towards your toes. Try to touch your chest to your knee. Repeat the stretch on the left side and then to the front. Hold each for a minimum of 15 seconds. In all cases, be careful not to arch your back.

Split Leg Stretch Side Bend and Front Stretch

Seated, place both legs out in front of you spreading them as wide as possible. Stretch your right hand forward. Stretch your left arm over your head and bend towards your right foot. Try to press your right shoulder to the floor inside your right knee. Repeat the stretch on the left side. Come back to center, cross your arms and place them on the floor in front of you - be careful to not arch your back. Hold for a minimum of 15 seconds on each side and the middle.

Stretching Program 2:

Forearm/Wrist Stretch Backwards

Stand or sit with your right palm up. Gently point your fingers towards the floor, using your left hand to assist in the stretch. Keep your right arm straight. Hold for stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds for each arm.

Stand or sit with your right palm down. Gently point your fingers towards the ceiling, using your left hand to assist in the stretch. Keep your right arm straight. Hold for stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds for each arm.

Forearm/Wrist Stretch Forwards

Stand or sit with your right palm down. Gently point your fingers towards the floor, using your left hand to assist in the stretch. Bend your right arm to assist in the stretch. Hold for a minimum of 10 seconds for each arm.

Anterior Deltoid Stretch

Stand with your feet about shoulder width apart and your hands at your sides. Gently push your straight arms behind you, stretching your shoulder. Hold the stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds.

Rhomboid/Rotator Cuff Stretch

Stand with your feet about shoulder width apart. Bring your right arm across your chest and use your left arm to cradle the right elbow joint. Pull your arm into your body keeping your shoulders level. Hold the stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds for each side.

Trapezius/Rotator Cuff Stretch

Stand with your feet about shoulder width apart. Bring your right arm across your chest and use your left arm to cradle the right elbow joint. Your right arm over your left shoulder and down your back. Reach down your back keeping your shoulders level. Hold the stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds for each side.

Triceps Stretch

Stand with your feet about shoulder width apart. Bring your bent right arm up by your right ear and gently reach down your back. Use your left hand to gently assist the stretch. Hold the stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds for each side.

Posterior Hand Clasp Stretch

Stand with your feet about shoulder width apart. Bring your bent right arm up by your right ear and gently reach down your back. Bring your bent left arm behind you and reach up your back. Try to touch your hands. To work towards touching your hands, you can hold a towel between them and "walk" the towel with one hand, assisting in the stretch. Hold the stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds for each side.

Upper Chest Stretch

Stand with your feet about shoulder width apart. Extend your arms to the side parallel to the floor and gently force them backwards. Hold the stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds.

Neck Extensor Stretch

Standing or sitting, bow your head forward and gently assist the stretch with both hands pulling on the back of your head. Concentrate on keeping your shoulders down and relaxed. Hold the stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds.

Neck Flexor Stretch

Standing or sitting, look upwards and gently assist the stretch with both hands pushing on your jaw. Concentrate on keeping your shoulders down and relaxed. Hold the stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds.

Neck Lateral Flexors Stretch

Standing or sitting tilt your head to your right, dropping your ear to your shoulder. Gently use your right hand to assist the stretch by pulling your head down. Concentrate on keeping your shoulders down and relaxed. Hold the stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds for each side.

Standing Split Leg Stretch

Place the right foot forward and move into a deep bow stance, keep your hands on your hips, press the hips forward - make sure that the right knee stays above the right ankle - stretch the chin upwards keeping the head high and the back straight. Hold for 15 seconds. Switch legs.

Split Leg Stretch and Front Stretch

Spread your legs out to the sides as far as you can - toes point up. Sit up high and stretch to the left. Reach towards your toes. Try to touch your chest to your knee. Repeat the stretch on the left side and then to the front. Hold each for a minimum of 15 seconds. In all cases, be careful not to arch your back.

Split Leg Stretch Side Bend and Front Stretch

Seated, place both legs out in front of you spreading them as wide as possible. Stretch your right hand forward. Stretch your left arm over your head and bend towards your right foot. Try to press your right shoulder to the floor inside your right knee. Repeat the stretch on the left side. Come back to center, cross your arms and place them on the floor in front of you - be careful to not arch your back. Hold for a minimum of 15 seconds on each side and the mid

Stretching Program 3:

First stretch your hands high above your head one at a time, like you were climbing a ladder - 3 with each hand

Side Stretches - 3 to each side.

Neck Rolls - 3 to each side.

Shoulder Rolls - 3 forward, 3 backward.

Sun Salutation - complete a minimum of 2 times, work up to 4. Hold each position for a minimum of 10 seconds - work up to 30. Be sure to breathe - DO NOT hold your breath. NOTE: the sun salutation is almost always one of the first set of postures done in all yoga routines. In power yoga classes and advanced yoga classes participants do their sun salutation up to 8 times.

- a) Stand with your feet about 8 inches apart. Bring your hands up to chest level, palms together. Open the hands up and raise them above and behind your head, and look up to the ceiling.
- b) Keeping your arms next to your ears, bend at the hips by pushing your hips back and then touch the floor, keep your back straight (note: if you are not flexible enough to touch the floor in this position - move your feet further apart)
- c) Bend your knees and place both hands on the floor. Move your left foot as far back as your can, toes on the floor, heel up (the right knee is still bent and must remain over the right ankle). Place your hands on the floor to steady yourself and press your hips forward, look ahead not at the ground.
- d) Place your hands on the floor in front of you. Move your right foot back parallel to the left foot and push your buttocks up into an inverted "V". Try to put your heels on the ground. Your weight should be evenly balanced on the feet and hands.
- e) Bring your knees down to the floor and slowly bring your chest down to floor level. Place the hands next to your shoulders. Press hips to floor and lift your shoulders up and look up at the ceiling - hands are just for balance. Straighten up, ready for next posture.
- f) Sit back on your heels. Place your chest on the floor, stretch out the arms and place the palms down on the floor. Rest your forehead on the floor. Try to keep your buttocks on your heels.
- g) Come back up on your hands and knees and repeat d) above - the inverted "V".
- h) Repeat c) above except move your left foot as far forward as you can.
- i) Bring the right foot up parallel to the left and place your hands on the floor, knees straight. Again if you can not touch the floor move your feet further apart.

j) Bring yourself up to a standing position by pressing your hips forward. At the same time move your arms to the side and over your head. Lean back and look at the ceiling.

k) Bring the hands, palms facing each other, to chest level.

Shake out your muscles and repeat

Dao Yin

a) Start with the feet a little more than shoulder width apart. Hold your right hand palm up next to your left hip. Circle the right hand forward and up over your head as you bend your knees and press your hips forward. The hand continues to circle, palm up, around the front. As your hand passes your face press your hips back. Once the hand is at the hip start the movement again. Complete 5 full turns.

b) Complete the same movement with the left hand. Complete 5 full turns.

c) Hold both hands near the hips. Circle both hands forward, with left crossing over right, over your head as you bend your knees and press your hips forward. As the hands cross again above your head press your hips back. Complete 5 full turns.

H) Relaxation: (NOTE: Be sure to breathe)

Take off your shoes and glasses. Sit down on the floor or mat. Bend your knees bent place your feet flat on the floor - hug your knees to you, close your eyes and be still for 10 seconds.

Place your hands behind the knees and pull them to the chest, and slowly lay down. Hold for 5 seconds then roll the knees around gently allowing the back to relax against the floor.

Keep your knees bent. Stretch arms out to your side, palms up. Roll knees slowly to the left and touch floor - then back to the right - repeat.

Come back to center and place your feet on the floor. First push your right leg straight, brushing the heel against the floor all the way, let the muscles relax. Next, straighten out the left in the same manner. Allow the feet to open to the sides.

Start with the right leg:

Roll the toes tightly - press the heel against the floor - then release

Point the toes toward the head and press the lower leg against the floor - then release

Repeat with Left leg:

Buttocks and Lower Back

Squeeze the buttock muscles and press against the floor - then release.

Tighten the stomach muscles and press lower back against the floor - then release. **BREATH**

Shoulders

Press the shoulders against the floor - then release.

Pull the shoulders towards the ears - then release.

Pull the shoulders toward chest - then release

Hands and Arms - both sides at same time

Make a fist and press the wrist to the floor - then release

Press the entire arm against the floor - then release.

Face

Scrunch up your face - then release.

Relax, breath in, breath out - concentrate on the warm air coming in and the cool air going out. **After a few minutes** - open your eyes, roll on your right side and then when you are ready sit up legs crossed in front of you.

Rub your hands together vigorously, when hot press them to your face and gently rub; first the eyes, next the forehead, and finally the cheeks moving back to the eyes. Move your hands to the top of your head and rub your scalp, then move the hands to the back of your neck and shoulders and rub your muscles gently. Move the hands to the small of the back, make a fist and rub in a circular fashion.

At this point you can do as much sitting meditation as you would like to do. Remember to breathe in and out through the nose – keep your attention on the coolness of the in breath and the warmth of the out breath. If your mind starts to wander – say, “my mind is wandering” then move your attention back to your breathing.

1) Healthy Eating - NOTE if your doctor has suggested a particular food regimen stick with it. The following is general information that will help you to eat right and is not meant as a substitute to your doctor's advice or recommendations.

So what should I eat? Your body needs fuel in order for you to complete your daily activities. Eating a balanced diet will assure that your body gets everything it needs to build muscle and maintain a healthy weight level. Many of us have struggled with our weight all our lives - we have gone from one diet to the next looking for the magic pill. Well I think that we all know by now there is no such thing. So as a reminder to all of us I have included the food guide pyramid published by the US Department of Agriculture. Adhering to these guidelines and completing your daily fitness program will help you be a healthier person.

Fats, Oils, and Sweets - USE SPARINGLY

Milk, Yogurt, & Cheese (low fat is best) - 2 to 3 servings

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts - 2 to 3 servings

Vegetables - 3 to 5 servings

Fruits - 2 to 4 servings

(Grains) Bread, Cereal, Rice & Pasta - 6 to 11 servings

What is a serving?

Grains - 1 slice of bread

1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta

1/2 cup of cooked cereal or 1 ounce of dry cereal

Fruits - 1 piece of melon

3/4 cup of fruit juice

1/2 cup of canned fruit

1/4 cup of dried fruit

1 medium banana, apple, orange, or grapefruit

Veges - 1/2 cup of raw or cooked veges

1 cup of green leafy raw veges

Milk Products - 1 cup of milk or yogurt

1 ounce of hard cheese

Meat and etc. - 1/2 cup of cooked beans

1 egg

3 ounces of lean meat, poultry, or fish

Fats, oils, and sweets - the less the better, use low fat oils when cooking or better yet steam your veges and broil the meat.

Remember this, exercise and a healthy diet may **not** make you thin, but even if they don't they can help make you healthier. For example, a study showed that obese men who were physically fit had a much lower death rate than normal-weight men who weren't physically fit. That does not mean that being over weight is fine however it does show how important physical fitness is.

SMOKING - quit

ALCOHOL - limit quantity

The best way to get the nutrients you need is through a healthy diet, not through expensive supplements that you think you need. Whole foods provide many nutrients we know about, and probably contain others that haven't been discovered. You may read or hear many convincing, scientific-sounding claims about nutritional supplements, such as megadoses of vitamins and minerals, but not all of them are based on fact. Some supplements that may be helpful in certain situations may cause harmful side effects. Be smart, **BEFORE** taking any supplements of any kind, check with your doctor.



