**At-Home Stretching between Massages**

* **Levator Scapula:** For pain that runs from the top of the shoulder to the top of the neck.
  + Pull your shoulder back and down as far as you can (grab the back-inner thigh to do this with ease)
  + As you do that, tilt your head towards the **opposite** shoulder (ear-to-shoulder) 
  + Then look away (towards the same direction your head is tilting)
  + And look down as far as you can
  + You want your neck to be pulled in as much of a diagonal line as possible from the shoulder blade on the affected side
  + Hold for 15-20 seconds, up to 5 reps
  + Repeat on the other side
* **Rotator Cuff:** To ease any pain, tingling or numbness down arms into fingers; it’s always good to keep the rotator cuff loose to avoid injury.
  + Place your arm behind your back, palm out
  + Bring your hand as close as possible to the back of your neck
  + Hold for 15-20 seconds then try to get it a little farther
  + The goal for this stretch is to be able to have your arm flat against the side of your body while the backs of your fingertips touch the base of your neck
  + Repeat on the other side
  + At the end of this stretch, to stretch another rotator cuff muscle, hold your arms out to the sides (like you’re a waiter holding trays of food) and pull them back as far as you can (like you’re trying to touch your elbows together behind your back)
  + ****Hold for 10-15 seconds
* **Pectorals:** For shoulders that slump forward, usually from working on computers or driving, causing pain in between the shoulder blades.
  + Place your hand on a wall or door frame, starting with your arm extended up as far as it will go
  + Then turn your whole body away from that arm
  + Hold for 15-20 seconds
  + Then move your hand down the wall an interval and repeat stretch
  + 029.JPGContinue repeating the stretch with your arm at different intervals until you do the stretch with your arm down by your side
  + Repeat on the other side
* **Rhomboids:** For pain between the shoulders blades.
  + Stand against a wall with your knees bent and your torso flat on the wall (like you’re doing a wall sit)
  + Put your arms upwards at 90˚ with your elbows and backs of your hands touching the wall
  + **Keeping your elbows and hands touching the wall,** slowly raise your arms up until your fingers touch above your head
  + Hold for 15 seconds
  + Do this up to 3-5 times per day
* **Anterior Deltoid:** For pain in the front of the shoulder joint/top of the arm
  + Stand in a doorway with your shoulder and elbow each at 90˚
  + Place the knuckles of a fist against the doorframe
  + Keeping your shoulder at 90˚, lean forward through the opening
  + Hold for 10-15 seconds, up to 3 reps
  + Repeat on the other side
* **Gluteals:** For pain in and around hip
  + While standing, lift your leg until your hip and knee are at 90˚
  + Grab your ankle with your opposite hand and pull it up toward the midline of your body
  + Hold for 10-15 seconds, up to 5 reps
  + Repeat on the other side
  + You can also do it sitting with hip and knee at 90˚, rest that ankle on the opposite knee
  + Bend forward at the hip to the left, right, and center
  + Hold for 10 seconds, up to 5 reps each direction
  + Repeat on the other side
* **Glutes/I.T. Band/Sacrum:** For pain in and around hip, tight I.T. Band, sacral tightness or pain
  + Laying flat on your back on the floor, bring your leg up until your hip is at 90˚ and your knee is bent. Rest your foot against the opposite knee
  + Grab just under the bent knee and pull the leg up and in towards the midline of your body until you feel it pulling in the top portion of your hip and almost to your lower back
  + Hold for 15-20 seconds, up to 5 reps
  + Repeat on the other side
* **Quads:** Usually tightens during exercise, so always stretch well before and after exercising! Tight quads pull the hips forward causing pressure and pain in the lower back, legs and sometimes knees.
  + While standing, grab your ankle and pull your heel as close to your bum as possible
  + While pulling your leg backwards, also pull your leg out to the side
  + Hold for 15-20 seconds, do 5-10 reps
  + Repeat on the other side
* **Hamstrings:** Usually tightens during exercise, so always stretch well before and after exercising! Tight Hamstrings pull the hips down, which straightens the natural curve of the lower back causing all-over back pain and pain while walking. Also, possible pain in buttock, upper thigh, and knee when sitting.
  + Stand with straight knees and bend forward to try to touch your toes
  + Hold for 15-20 seconds, do 5-10 reps
  + Place hands and feet on the floor with the buttocks raised (creating a triangle)
  + Keeping knees and back as straight as possible, walk your hands towards your feet as far as you can go
  + Hold for 1-2 minutes
* **Calves:** For tight or painful calves, and relief from Charley Horses
  + **\*Works best if you have stairs or a curb available to use\***
  + Stand with your toes raised up against the side of a stair (if you have one available, otherwise keep your foot flat on the floor)
  + **Keeping your knee straight,** lean forward with your whole body until you feel the pull throughout your calf and sometimes into your Hamstrings
* **Diaphragm:** For those who normally breathe with their lungs more so than their diaphragms, can cause a hump at the base of the neck which creates a lot of neck and back pain
  + Stand relaxed with your elbows at 90˚, so your forearms are parallel to the floor
  + As you inhale, push your elbows down towards the floor by forcibly dropping
  + your shoulders
  + Relax your shoulders as you exhale
  + Repeat as often as possible
* **Tight Lower Back:** For relief from a tight, achy lower back
  + Laying on the floor flat on your back, bring your bent knees up to your chest as far as possible
  + Wrap your arms around your legs and hug tightly
  + Rock back and forth until you feel the tightness in the lower back loosen up a little
* **Achy Back/Neck:** For relief from an achy upper back, lower back, and neck usually from slouching while sitting
  + **\*Need a balance ball\***
  + Sit on balance ball and rock yourself down until you’re in a back bend over the ball
  + Then rock back and forth until you feel the stretch affecting all the achy areas

**Water Intake and Ice Therapy**

* **Minimum** daily water intake should be half (⅟₂) your body weight in ounces (oz.)
  + If you are doing any exercising or exerting activity (e.g. manual labor), or spending a long time out in the sun; the you need to be drinking your FULL body weight in ounces (oz.) per day minimum
* Typically most pain, no matter how minor, comes from an injury (usually causing scar tissue) which brings about a degree of inflammation; because, once something is clogging the body’s natural pathways (like scar tissue), the fluids can’t pass through as quickly as they should. Not all injuries are obvious, or made known to your conscious mind. The same is true of inflammation. However, if it goes unattended it could become a major problem (i.e. Arthritis, Tendonitis, Bursitis), or several major problems all stemming from the body trying to overcompensate for that one minor injury.
* Muscle tightness occurs when the body gets accustomed to how the person learns to carry oneself. This could be influenced by past pain or injury, unsupportive footwear, day-to-day activities/repetitive actions, or social situations. Somewhere buried way in the depths of the subconscious mind, the brain is constantly instructing those muscles to contract. If the muscle never gets a chance to rest, then it becomes tight.
* **Why Ice?**
  + Ice speeds up healing by pushing stagnant fluids away from the area to be circulated back through the heart and lymph system; which allows for an unblocked passageway in which fresh, healthy fluids may get to the area faster. The more rapid the fluids can travel, the less inflammation will be clogging things, so the better the body can heal itself.
  + Ice also helps with the healing of soft tissue via the numbing process. When the brain is holding onto a muscle and never allowing the muscle to rest, numbing the muscle forces the brain to let go and release the muscle because it loses track of it. When a muscle or group of muscles is numbed, the entire area is reset to its proper posture.
* **Why not heat?**
  + Heat draws fluid to the targeted area of the body, which can make inflammation much worse. Heat is only beneficial if it is used immediately before or during bodywork (i.e. massage or a hot tub with the jets targeting the affected area), or in between ice treatments- as in Contrast Therapy (below).
* **Icy Plunge**: Best for limbs- it is perfect for people who perform the same repetitive actions or postures daily, like with computers or driving. This therapy is most effective if used daily, or on a regular basis. However, if only used when in direct pain, it is still extremely beneficial.
  + Get a bucket or cooler of ice water
  + Dunk the limb to just above the main joint (if hand hurts- dunk to above the wrist. If it’s entire forearm- dunk to above the elbow)
  + Dunk for 4-5 minutes, until limb is completely numb
  + Allow to thaw
    - **For beginners**, to get the body over the shock of the cold:
      * Dunk for 45 seconds
      * Rest for 2 seconds
      * Dunk for 1 minute 30 seconds
      * Rest for 2 seconds
      * Dunk for 2 minutes
      * Allow to thaw
* **Icy Cup**: Best for a small area of pain or tightness
  + Obtain a block of ice- ice cubes work, but it will have to be a few. The easiest is to fill a small Dixie cup with water, freeze it and when it’s ready to use, tear off the top portion to expose a block of ice while there’s still a piece of cup to grip.
  + Using the block of ice, swirl small circles over the affected area continuously for 60-90 seconds (wiping up drips with a towel in the process)
  + Allow area to rest for a few seconds- it will be fairly red
  + Repeat the circles for another 60-90 seconds
  + Allow to rest for a few seconds
  + Repeat the circles for a final 60-90 seconds
  + Wipe dry and allow to thaw
* **Sports Wrap**: Best for painful, injured or Arthritic joints
  + Soak a hand towel in ice water for ~20 minutes, until it is freezing cold
  + Slather the entire joint- front/back/above/below- with 100% essential oil of Peppermint, or a Menthol gel or cream (i.e. BioFreeze, Bengay, Aspercreme, etc.)
  + Wring out the hand towel and wrap it around the joint
  + Wrap it all tightly in cellophane wrap
  + Leave it on until the towel feels room temperature to the touch
  + Remove the cellophane and towel- the joint will feel frozen for 2-3 hours afterwards
* **Ice Pack**: Best for a medium-sized or hard-to-reach area of pain or tightness
  + Soak a hand towel in ice water for ~20 minutes, until it is freezing cold
  + Wrap the hand towel around the ice pack- (just an ice pack, with no moisture around it, only affects the layers of skin. To get the affects of the ice into the deep layers of muscle and tissue, it needs to have an element of moisture. To that end, if the moist towel is not already freezing cold, the ice pack has to take the time to freeze the towel before it can start freezing the body, so it takes longer and usually isn’t able to stay frozen for as long as necessary to have the full effect.)
  + Place ice pack on affected area for 20-30 minutes
  + Remove and allow to thaw
* **Contrast Therapy**: Best for obvious inflammation in an area, or extreme pain/tightness or spasms
  + Perform the above steps in numbing the affected area with an ice pack
  + Remove ice pack and immediately apply heat:
  + Heat a dampened towel in the microwave, or pot of boiling water that has since been removed from the fire, until it is almost too hot to touch
  + Follow the instructions on the hot pack as to how long it needs to microwave or be in a pot of once-boiling water
  + Wrap the hot towel around the hot pack and place on affected area
    - Let it sit aside for a minute or 2 if it’s too hot for the skin
  + Place a dry towel over the heat pack to keep the heat from escaping during the therapy
  + Allow pack to sit on the area for 30 minutes
  + Remove heat pack
  + Immediately place a fresh ice pack on the area
  + Allow ice pack to sit for 20-30 minutes
  + Perform 1 more round of heat followed by 1 more round of ice
  + Remove final ice pack
  + Allow area to rest