

# HEALTHY MOVES

## Stretch of the Month

### Neck and Shoulder Stretch

#### Why Stretch the shoulder shruggers?

These muscles connect your neck and cranium to your shoulder blades. They are responsible for shrugging the shoulders. Ever notice when your stressed: 1- how your shoulders seem to lift towards your ears? 2- how tense you get in the area between the ear and the top of the shoulder? The following two moves will help reduce the buildup of tension in these muscles.

Remember that maintaining flexible neck muscles may delay the onset of arthritic discomforts and reduce some causes of pinched nerves and headaches.

#### How to Stretch (Levator Scapulae)

- Sit in a chair with an erect back rest.
- Slide your buttocks back so that the lower back is fully supported by the backrest.
- Place your right hand over the top of the head, behind the left ear.
- Let your left hand fall to the side of your body.
- Point your nose toward the right hip - i.e. look down and to the right.
- Now allow the weight of your right arm to pull your head down and to the right. Always be gentle.
- (optional) Slowly reach downward with your left hand ( depress the left shoulder). Just a little move in this direction will cause much stretch so go slow.
- Repeat for other side



- *Hold each stretch for 20 to 30 seconds*
- *Repeat 3 times alternating sides*

*For both stretches discussed in this article, you should feel only a comfortable stretch in side of the neck and/or the top of the shoulder.*

#### How to Stretch (Trapezius)

- Sit in a chair as previously described. Tuck your chin while looking straight ahead.
- Place your right hand on your head just above the left ear.
- Now slowly and gently pull your right ear towards the right shoulder.
- (optional) Reach slowly toward the floor with your left hand.
- Repeat for other side



The chin tuck is very important because it eliminates a forward head posture (upper cervical extension). This lengthens the tissues in the back of the neck and opens the spaces, in which ligaments and other joint tissue could otherwise get pinched.

Always work within an easy level of comfort when stretching tense muscles. Stretching should never hurt.

If you suffer from neck pain please discuss with your health professional if either of these stretches is appropriate for you.

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Domenic Lopez B.Sc., Exercise Science, is owner and operator of Healthy Moves, a private practice where massage therapy and movement education help you achieve better living. Domenic can be contacted at 610-725-0995 or via email at [DomenicLopez@verizon.net](mailto:DomenicLopez@verizon.net). This article can be found at [www.HealthyMoves-PA.com](http://www.HealthyMoves-PA.com).

#### Disclaimer:

Suggestions made in this publication are no substitute for medical advice. If you have any pain or difficulty performing this stretch seek advice from your appropriate health professional.