

Warm-Up and Stretch



Key Positions in the Warm-Up and Stretch Program

Important body positions essential to your safety

Neutral Standing Posture

The neutral standing posture is the starting position for all of the exercises in this program.

- Stand wide (either front-to-back or side-to-side stance)
- Toes slightly outward in side-to-side stance
- Knees slightly flexed
- Head in neutral position (head up, place index finger on chin and gently push chin in)
- Shoulders back, chest up, back neutral (natural s-curve of the spine)

Pelvic Tilt

Some stretches include the pelvic tilt, but this movement should only be used where indicated. Where pelvic tilt has not been specified, maintain the natural s-curve of the spine.

Neutral standing posture (side-to-side stance)

- Move hips forward, tightening buttocks and abdomen
- Back should be flat, no arching

When to use Pelvic Tilt

- To effectively stretch the lower back
- To maximize the effects of specific lower-body stretches
- To counter the effects of excessive (until it hurts) arching of the lower back

Ready Position

A stable athletic stance used in sport, also known as the Basic Squat. This position should be used as a starting position for manual handling activities.

Neutral standing posture (front-to-back or side-to-side stance)

- Finger tips pressed into crease of hip joint/s
- Lower body by flexing at hips, knees and ankles
- Gently push with fingertips through hip joint/s so buttocks move backwards and back remains neutral
- At end of move, look down – knees should be aligned directly over toes
- Keep back neutral (natural curve of spine)
- Let your fitness level determine how low you go

Note

This publication is part of WorkSafeNB's copyrighted *Back In Form (BIF) Training System*. Before performing this warm-up and stretch program, contact WorkSafeNB and ask to speak with an ergonomics consultant in your area. We can provide proper training and help you to implement a program at your workplace.

If you have any personal health limitations, previous back injuries or other concerns, we strongly urge you to consult with a medical professional before beginning the program.

We have produced a pamphlet and DVD to accompany this *Warm-Up and Stretch* poster. In it, we have included a glossary of terms, detailed information about proper technique, and several tips. Please read this pamphlet carefully before proceeding with the training system.



A component of WorkSafeNB's **Back in Form Training System**

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General Muscle Warm-ups

Repeat 5-10 times

Note: shading on drawings indicates area being stretched.

Head Drop (neck)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Gently press chin inward with index finger
- Gently tilt head to one side, keeping ear aligned with shoulder
- Return head to neutral position
- Repeat, other side

Chin Drop (neck)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Gently press chin inward with index finger
- Gently drop chin to chest
- Return head to neutral position

Shoulder Shrug/Circling (shoulders)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Draw both shoulders up toward ears, pause and release
- Circle both shoulders slowly, forward or backward

Arm Raise (front of shoulders)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Arms extended at sides, wrists slightly extended and elbows slightly flexed
- Raise arms to shoulder level, return to start

Arm Pullback (back of shoulders)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Arms extended at sides, wrists slightly extended and elbows slightly flexed
- Behind back, raise and lower arms to a comfortable level

Wide Arm Circle (shoulders)

Neutral standing posture, front-to-back stance

- Move arm (on same side as the foot that is out front) in forward or backward circle
- Repeat, other arm
- Variation:** For limited shoulder range of motion, place hand on shoulder and circle elbow, or let arm hang down in front of body and circle like a pendulum

Gentle Pivot (lower body)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Elbows flexed at 90 degrees
- Turn toe of one foot to side, rotate pelvis in a **slow and controlled** manner to same side by using the toe of opposite foot as pivot point
- Entire body should turn as one unit (don't twist at the waist)
- At end of pivot, flex at hips, knees, ankles, and lower body
- Return to neutral standing posture
- Repeat, other side

Basic Squat (lower body)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Hands on hips
- Lower to Ready Position and continuously flex and extend at hips, knees and ankles in up and down direction

Tip: Refer to Ready Position for detailed positioning tips and safety precautions.

Side Shift (front of thighs)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Hands on hips
- Lower to Ready Position
- Lower body to one side by shifting body weight over thigh (flex knee of shifting leg while extending opposite leg)
- Return to neutral standing posture
- Repeat, over other thigh

Tip: Ensure knee does not go past toe at end of move and it flexes in line with direction in which the toes are pointing.

Combination Side Shift (front of thighs)

Once comfortable with the "Side Shift", combine both sides into one movement by eliminating the up and down motion, and incorporating a horizontal, side-to-side movement over each thigh.

Front Shift (lower body)

Neutral standing posture, front-to-back stance

- Hands on hips
- Flex both knees and lower body toward the ground
- Return to neutral standing posture
- Repeat, over other thigh

Tip: Let your fitness level determine how low you go!

Back Shift (lower body)

Neutral standing posture, front-to-back stance

- Hands on hips
- Flex the back knee, and lower buttocks as though sitting in a chair
- Return to neutral standing posture
- Repeat, over other thigh

Combination Back to Front Shift (lower body)

Once comfortable with the "Front Shift" and "Back Shift", combine them into one movement by eliminating the up and down motion and incorporating a horizontal, back-to-front movement.

Tension-Breaker Stretches

Hold 8-10 seconds each side

Neck Forward (back of neck)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Gently press chin inward with index finger
- Don't force head down
- Tip:** If you don't feel a stretch, place hand on back of head and gently guide head forward.

Ear to Shoulder (sides of neck, top of shoulders)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Gently press chin inward with index finger
- Tilt head to left, keeping ear aligned with shoulder
- Repeat, other side
- Tip:** If you don't feel a stretch on the right side of your neck, grasp right hand behind your back with your left hand, pull down gently at an angle across the back.

Upper Torso Stretch (upper back, back of shoulders, arms, hands, wrists, fingers)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance, chin in

- Raise arms to shoulder level and interlace fingers, palms out
- Roll shoulders forward, push out on upper back and stretch through arms and fingers

Tip: Feel free to pelvic tilt to feel stretch in lower back.

Chest Stretch (chest, front of shoulders)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance, chin in

- Clasp hands behind back, elbows flexed
- Guide elbows upward while pushing out and up with chest

Tip: If your back arches excessively, pelvic tilt to neutral.

Variation: If clasping hands is uncomfortable, place hands on lower back, fingers down.

Tricep Stretch (back of upper arms)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance, chin in

- Raise one arm overhead, elbow flexed
- Grasp arm behind elbow, gently press down at an angle toward opposite side of back
- Repeat, other arm

Tips: Keep head up and chin in. It may be more comfortable to grasp the hand and pull rather than push on the elbow. If back arches excessively, pelvic tilt to neutral.

Variation: A hand or wall in front of the upper arm can be used to push elbow backward.

Shoulder Stretch (back of shoulders)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance, chin in

- Extend one arm in front of body
- Place opposite hand just above the elbow, gently apply pressure to move arm toward opposite shoulder
- Repeat, other arm

Tip: Ensure there is no upward movement in the arm being stretched and that the hand is positioned behind the elbow.

Cat Stretch (lower back)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Lower to Ready Position
- Slide hands down thighs almost to knees (fingers pointed in, elbows slightly flexed)
- Keep back neutral to maintain natural s-curve of spine
- Pelvic tilt to stretch lower back
- Push out on upper back, curl shoulders forward, like a stretching cat

Tip: Feels great after long periods of standing!

Variation: You might perform this stretch more easily holding a chair back or table.

Shoulder Dip (back)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Lower to Ready Position
- Perform the Cat Stretch at left
- While looking straight ahead, gently dip one shoulder in toward the opposite leg while pushing out on upper back
- Repeat, other side

Tip: Don't twist your torso; keep shoulder movement minimal. A nice stretch after standing for long periods!

Abdominal Stretch (entire body, emphasizing abdomen)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Extend arms overhead, clasp hands, elbows in line with ears
- Stretch arms upward as though grasping for something that is slightly out of reach
- Allow slight arch in lower back

Tip: A nice stretch after sitting for long periods!

Variation: Standing on tiptoes will maximize the stretch.

Side Stretch (sides of abdomen)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Raise one arm overhead, elbow in line with ear, opposite hand on hip
- Reach up and over toward opposite side of the body; reach for something just over the opposite shoulder
- Repeat, other side

Tip: Don't bend sideways at the waist; instead, reach up and over your head while pushing out on the side of your abdomen.

Hip Flexor Stretch (front of upper thighs)

Neutral standing posture, front-to-back stance

- Place hand on buttock of back leg
- Gently do a Front Shift and allow heel of back leg to come off the floor. If back is arching, move front foot farther forward to ensure that when in the end position of the move, the knee rests directly over the toe and the upper body is neutral.
- Rise to neutral standing posture
- Repeat, other side

Tip: To maximize stretch, pelvic tilt.

Variation: If stretch is not felt or movement is uncomfortable, place front foot on a chair or bench and perform the above movement.

Hamstring Stretch (back of legs)

Neutral standing posture, front-to-back stance

- Place hands on thigh of front leg
- Perform Back Shift while pulling toe of front foot upward
- Flex through the hip of the back leg while gently pushing through the heel of front foot
- Don't bend at waist, flex through hip
- Rise to neutral standing posture
- Repeat, other side

Tips: Use a wall for support and balance, if needed. Remember, keep knee of front leg slightly flexed.

Variation: If stretch is still not felt or movement is uncomfortable, perform with front foot on a chair, heel down, toe up.

Standing Groin Stretch (inner thighs)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance

- Lower to Ready Position
- Hand on hip
- Perform Side Shift (ensure knee of extended leg remains slightly flexed)
- Repeat, other side

Tips: A wall can be used for support. To maximize stretch, pelvic tilt.

Variation: If stretch can't be felt, widen stance.

Standing Quadricep Stretch (front of thighs)

Neutral standing posture, side-to-side stance, one hand on firm support

- Flex knees and lower body to grasp top of one foot
- Pull foot up toward buttocks, keeping thigh of the flexed leg parallel with the supporting leg
- Ensure knee points toward the ground
- Repeat, other side

Tip: To maximize the stretch, pelvic tilt. If you can't grasp the top of your foot, try for a pant leg or the back of your shoe!

Variation: To help with balance, you can also place the flexed knee on the seat of a chair, ensuring that the flexed knee doesn't bear your weight.

Calf Stretch (calves)

Neutral standing posture, front-to-back facing a wall with front foot touching wall

- Place hands on wall, gradually perform Front Shift
- Move elbows to wall, keeping heels flat on floor
- As you complete the movement, ensure back is not arched
- Repeat, other side

Tip: To maximize stretch, pelvic tilt.

Variation: If you can't feel the stretch, widen stance.