

# GARDENING

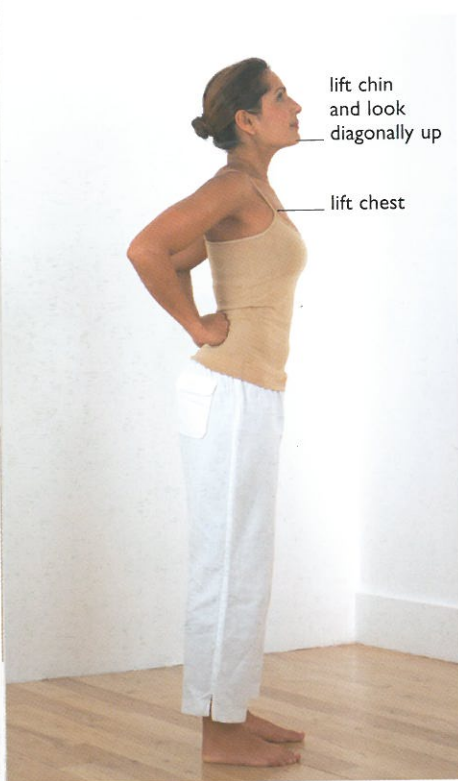
Gardening and outdoor work are not as mundane as one might think. Reaching and leaning can mean that the back holds many awkward positions. Pruning works the muscles in the forearms and hands. Kneeling and repeated bending of the knees can irritate the IT bands, the tendons that run from the hips to the shins.

## LOWER BACK FIST PRESS

This stretch is essential for gardeners as it realigns the discs in the lower back, which helps to relieve strain on them. Focus the effect by tightening your abdominals and lifting your groin.

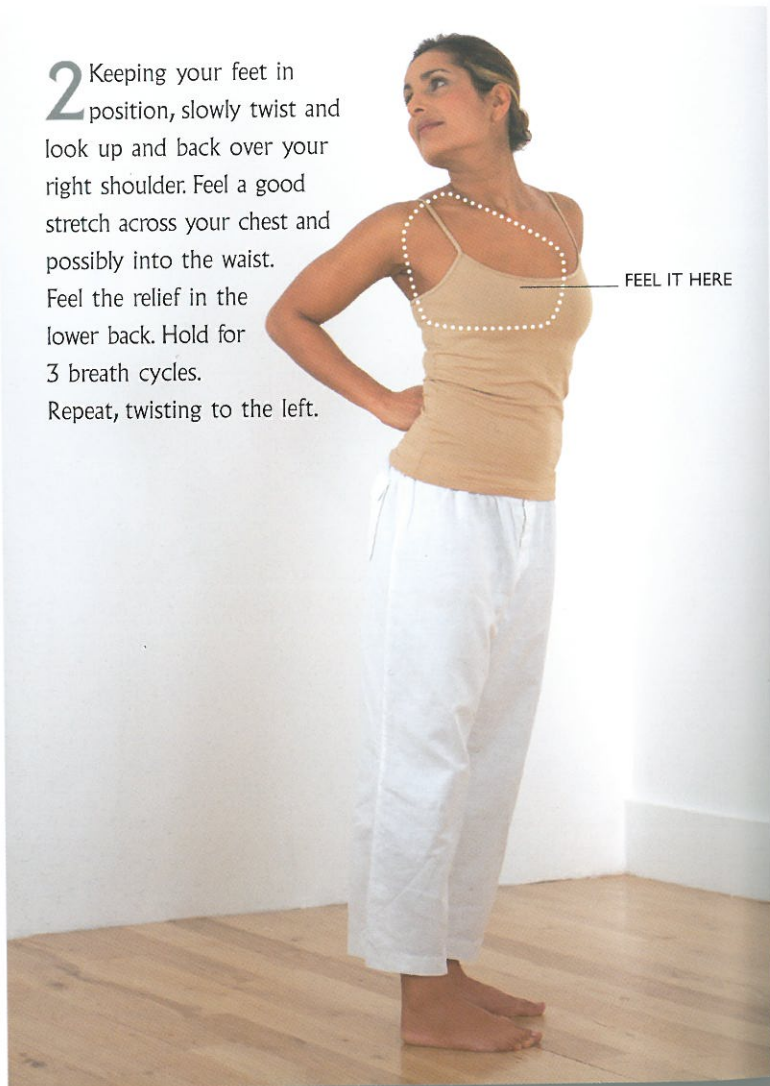
### STRETCHING HELPS TO:

- **restore** the natural curve of the lower back and prevent pain caused by leaning over.
- **increase circulation** to the knees by improving the flexibility of the hips.



lift chin and look diagonally up  
lift chest

**2** Keeping your feet in position, slowly twist and look up and back over your right shoulder. Feel a good stretch across your chest and possibly into the waist. Feel the relief in the lower back. Hold for 3 breath cycles. Repeat, twisting to the left.



FEEL IT HERE

**1** Stand with your feet hip-width apart. Make two fists with your hands and press them firmly into your lower back as you tighten your abdominals.

## WRIST CIRCLES



Hold your arms still as you circle both hands at the wrists. Circle 10 times in each direction.

## KNEE CIRCLES



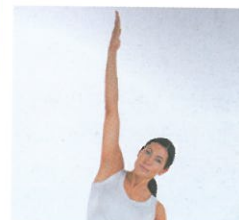
Pull your navel into your spine. Reach down and place one hand on each knee. Allow your knees to support some of your upper body weight. Keep your back as straight as you can by leaning over from the hips. Gently circle your knees. Breathe easily as you circle 6 times in each direction.

## MINI CATALOGUE

Perform these stretches to help protect your back and legs. You could also add the hand exercises on page 107.



**arms open p29**  
hold for 3 breath cycles



**standing side stretch p31**  
hold for 4 breath cycles  
repeat on other side



**inner thigh squat p45**  
hold for 3 breath cycles



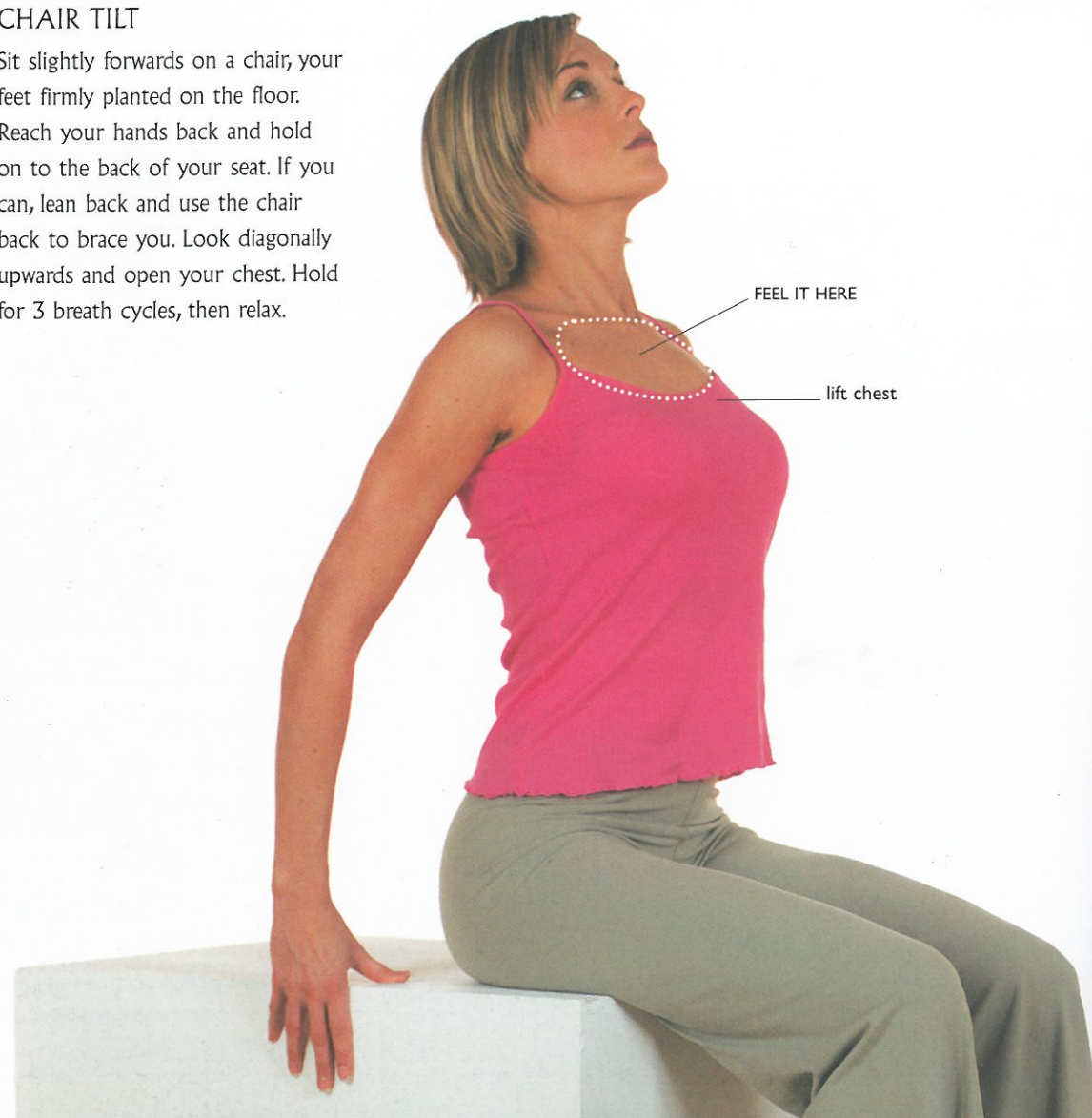
**side hip stretch p43**  
hold for 4 breath cycles  
repeat on other side

## COMPUTER USE

The arteries that supply oxygen to the nerves in our neck and shoulders run through a narrow space between the collar bone and first rib. Tensing up to focus forwards on our work compresses this area, causing tired muscles as well as nerve and tendon irritation. Do at least two of these stretches every half an hour.

### CHAIR TILT

Sit slightly forwards on a chair, your feet firmly planted on the floor. Reach your hands back and hold on to the back of your seat. If you can, lean back and use the chair back to brace you. Look diagonally upwards and open your chest. Hold for 3 breath cycles, then relax.

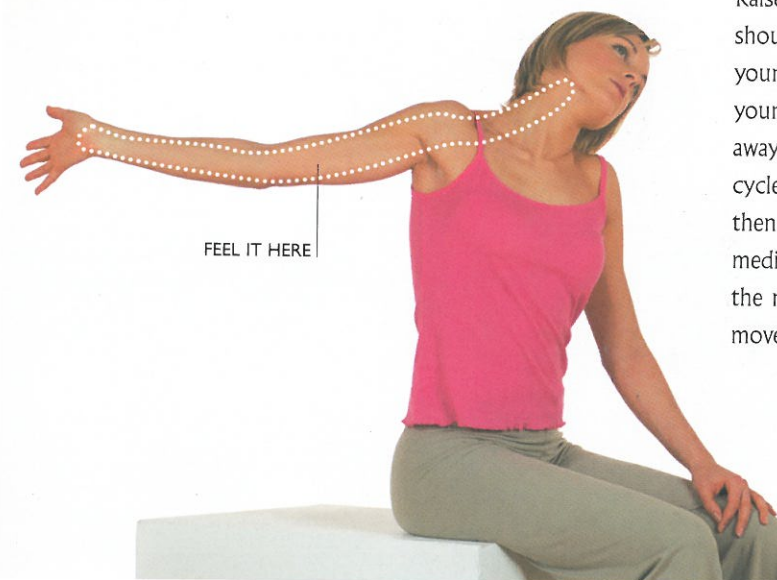


#### STRETCHING HELPS TO:

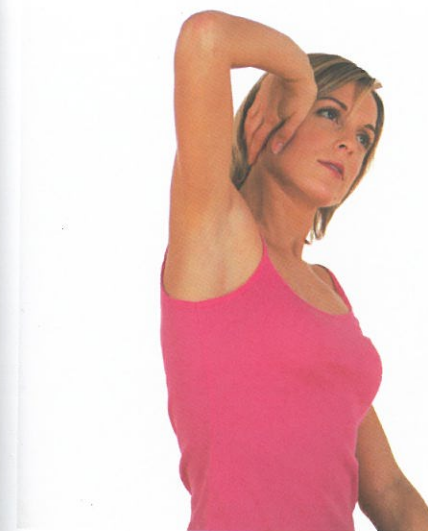
- **prevent nerve damage** from repetitive mouse and keyboard use.
- **relieve tension build-up** in the shoulders, back, and arms.
- **prevent eye strain** and headaches by refreshing the eyes.

### MEDIAN NERVE STRETCH

Raise your right arm to just below shoulder height at your side, and turn your palm to face away from you. Point your fingers back as you tilt your head away from your arm. Hold for 3 breath cycles, then relax. Do this 3 more times, then repeat on the other side. The median nerve runs along the arm from the neck and controls the intricate movements of the hand and fingers.



### ULNAR NERVE STRETCH



Raise your right hand and rest it against your right cheek with fingers pointing downwards. Tilt your left ear towards your left shoulder. Hold for 3 breath cycles, then relax. Do this 3 more times, then repeat on the other side. This stretch will help to keep your grip strong.

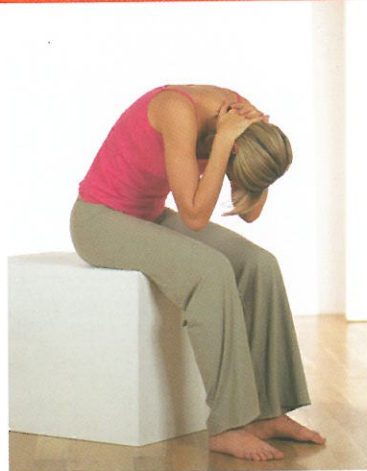
### RADIAL NERVE STRETCH



Make a fist and bend it inwards towards the forearm. Straighten your elbow and lift your hand behind you. Hold for 2 breath cycles, then relax. Do this 3 more times, then repeat on the other hand. Although you feel it in the forearm, it eases the entire radial nerve to the hand.

**SEATED COBRA**

A great upper back relaxer, this reverses the forwards-slumping posture of rounded shoulders. Be sure to lengthen the back of your neck and reach out through the top of your head rather than just cocking it back in step 2.

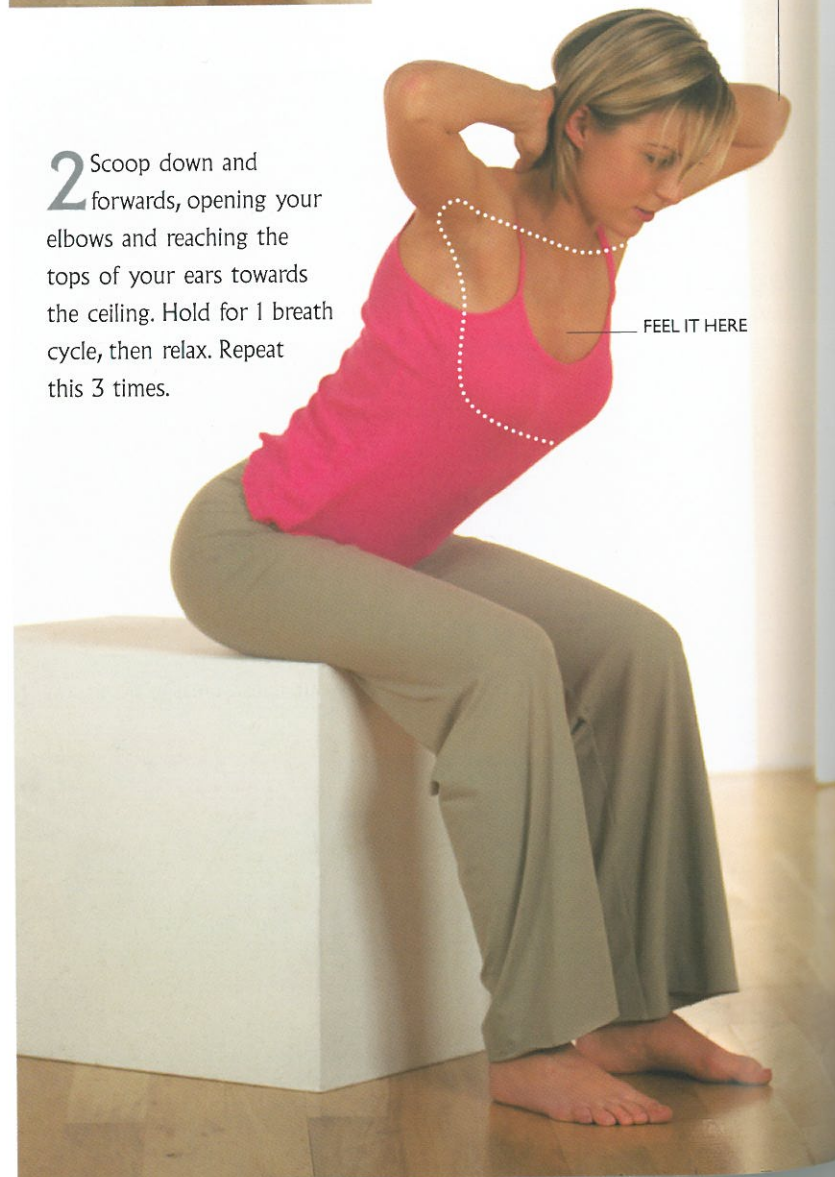


**1** Sit towards the back of a chair and plant your feet firmly on the floor. Lean forwards and clasp your hands behind your neck.

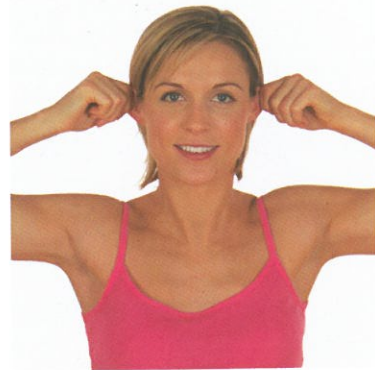
pull elbows back

**2** Scoop down and forwards, opening your elbows and reaching the tops of your ears towards the ceiling. Hold for 1 breath cycle, then relax. Repeat this 3 times.

FEEL IT HERE



**EAR PULL**



Diffuse tension by pinching the hard cartilage in each of your ears and gently pulling upwards. Hold for 2 breath cycles, then release and repeat again. Try yawning as you breathe to help release tight jaw muscles that can contribute to headache pain.

**CLASPED HAND ROTATIONS**



Tuck your right elbow into your body. Interlace your fingers, and use your left hand to help you to make circles with your right wrist. Circle 10 times in each direction. Repeat with the other hand.

**CLASPED HAND CIRCLES**



Sit up straight, with head up and feet firmly planted on the floor. Interlace your fingers and make vertical circling motions with your hands, moving up, in towards yourself, down, then forwards 5 times. Then change direction and repeat 5 times. Consciously inhale and exhale throughout.

**FORCEFUL EXHALATION**



Sit comfortably with one hand on your chest, the other on your stomach. Slowly but forcefully exhale through your open mouth for a count of 15 seconds. Feel as if you are wringing out a wet cloth with your chest. Breathe normally for 2 breath cycles, then repeat the forceful exhalation once more. This is extremely effective for relieving tense shoulders – it activates the diaphragm so strongly that it causes the upper shoulders and base of the neck to relax.

**MINI CATALOGUE**

Your eyes and neck need regular stretching when working at a computer for long periods – so do your waist, ribs, and legs.



**eye stretches p23**  
repeat sequence once



**neck stretch p24**  
hold for 2 breath cycles;  
repeat on other side



**standing side stretch p31**  
hold for 4 breath cycles;  
repeat on other side



**standing quad stretch p44**  
hold for 3 breath cycles;  
repeat on other leg

# NECK AND SHOULDERS

The neck, shoulders, and arms work together as a functional unit. Usually all three areas are involved when there's a problem with any part of the group. As always, exercise caution when stretching anything that is sore, and breathe into the movements. The Towel Rock, below, will work wonders for a crick in the neck.

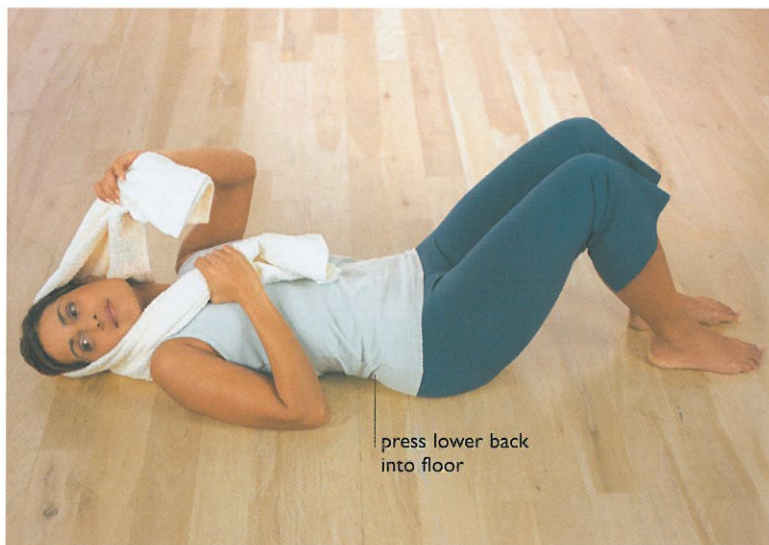
## TOWEL ROCK

If one side of your neck is stiff or achy, begin by rocking away from that side. However, moving in both directions can help to restore range of motion.

**1** Start by folding a towel lengthwise into thirds. Lie down with knees bent and place the folded towel behind your head. Hold the longer end on your chest, the other by the side of your face. Press your lower back into the floor.



**2** Grasp the towel firmly at your chest with your right hand. Gently rock your head to the right by pulling the towel with your left hand. Perform about 10 small and smooth rocking motions. Repeat on the other side, if it is comfortable to do so.



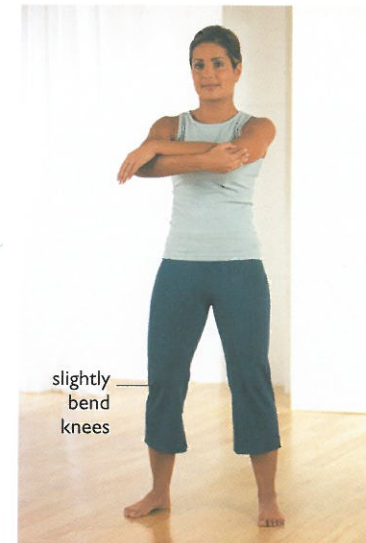
### CAUTIONS AND TIPS

**Try wrapping** a packet of frozen peas in a tea towel and applying it to the affected area for 20 minutes.

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P. 147

## ARM CROSS

Be sure to keep your shoulder from riding up towards your ear as you lift your elbow slightly. Ensure that your elbow remains at chest level.



**1** Stand with feet about shoulder-width apart. Hold your hips steady by pulling your navel into your spine and tightening your buttocks. Cup your left elbow in your right hand, holding under the arm.



**2** Use your right hand to pull your left elbow gently over to the right. Feel the stretch in the upper arm, back of the left shoulder, and along your shoulder blade. Hold for 3 breath cycles, then repeat on the other side.

## FACE CLOCK

Lie on your back with knees bent. Imagine that your face is a clock: 12 is the crown of your head, 3 is your right ear, 6 is your chin, and 9 is your left ear. Roll your head back slightly to 12, then, pressing your head into the floor at each number, slowly move round to 3, 6, 9, and finally 12 again. Perform 4 clock circles in each direction. Breathe normally throughout.

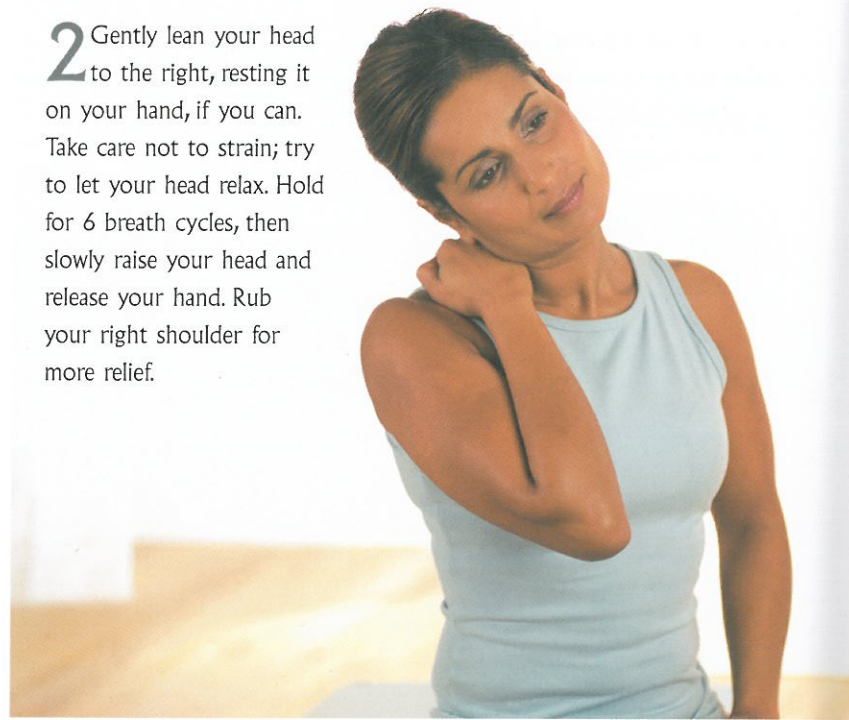
**SHOULDER HOLD**

This stretch is demonstrated on the right side of the neck, but perform it to the affected side.



**1** Cup your right hand on your trapezius, the meaty area at the top of your shoulder. Gently squeeze with the heel of your hand and pads of your fingers as you pull up.

**2** Gently lean your head to the right, resting it on your hand, if you can. Take care not to strain; try to let your head relax. Hold for 6 breath cycles, then slowly raise your head and release your hand. Rub your right shoulder for more relief.



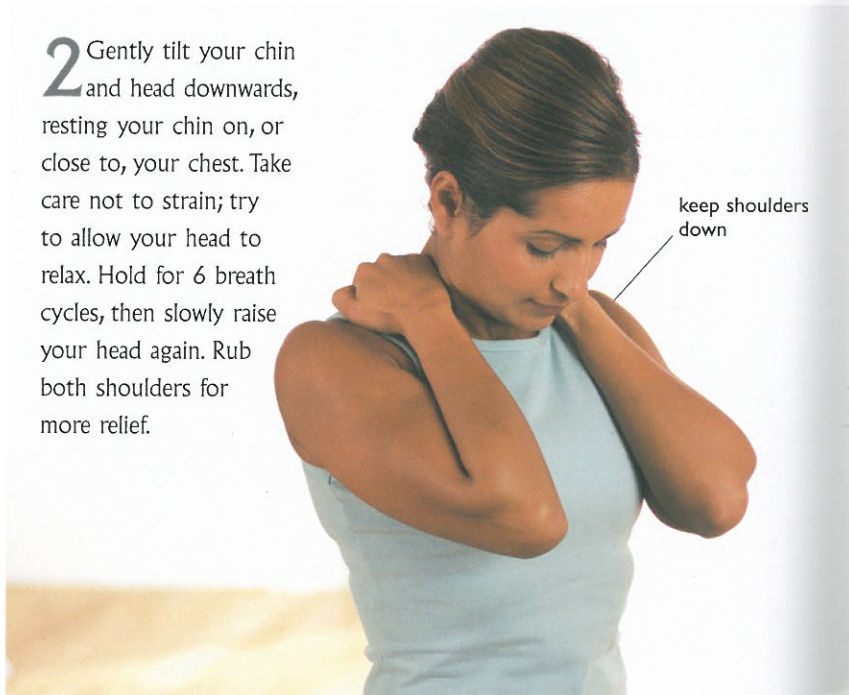
**TWO-HANDED HOLD**

Try this stretch to relieve the discomfort of a stiff or sore neck.



**1** Cup both trapezius muscles, the meaty areas at the tops of your shoulders, in your hands. Squeeze with the heels of your hands and pads of your fingers as you pull up.

**2** Gently tilt your chin and head downwards, resting your chin on, or close to, your chest. Take care not to strain; try to allow your head to relax. Hold for 6 breath cycles, then slowly raise your head again. Rub both shoulders for more relief.



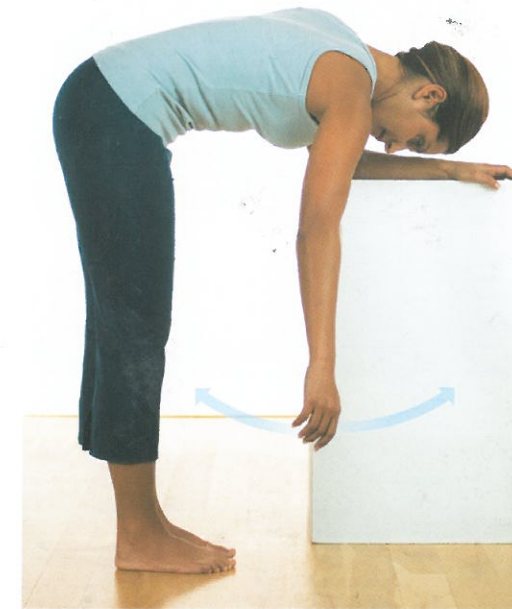
**PENDULUMS**

Use a countertop or table for support when performing this moving shoulder stretch.



**1** Lean forwards, brace yourself on a support, and flatten your back. Allow your right arm to dangle freely, then make 10 circles in each direction. Repeat on the other arm.

**2** Relax your right arm and allow it to dangle freely. Gently swing it back and forth like a pendulum. Do this 10 times, then repeat on the other arm.



**SHOULDER ROLLS**

Stand straight and hold your pelvis steady by pulling your navel into your spine and tightening your buttocks. Try to keep your head aligned over your spine as you perform slow shoulder rolls: forwards, up past your ears, then back, squeezing the shoulder blades together. Complete the roll by pulling your shoulders down. Perform 10 shoulder rolls in this manner.



**MINI CATALOGUE**

You will be amazed by how much neck and shoulder relief these scalp, face, eye, and hand stretches can provide.



**hair pull p22**  
perform 2 times, moving around the head



**lion stretch p23**  
say "ahhh" for 5 counts



**eye stretches p23**  
repeat sequence once



**clapsed fingers p28**  
hold for 3 breath cycles

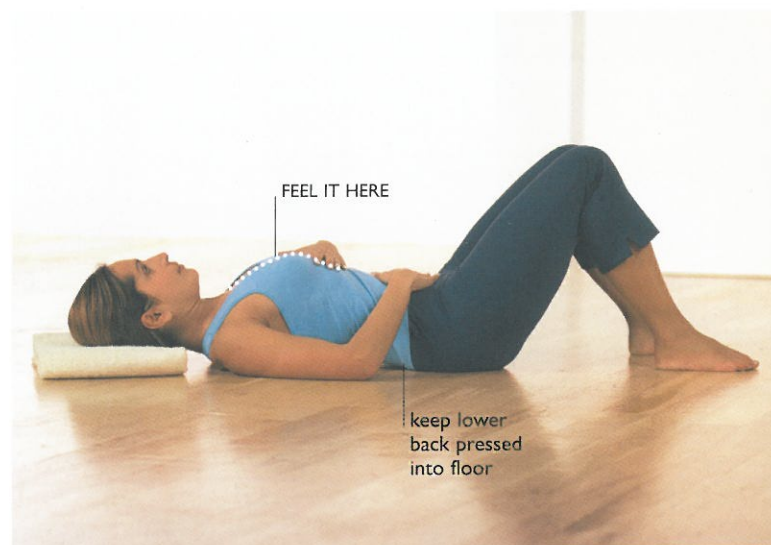
## ARMS AND HANDS

You may be surprised to see stretches for the chest and ribcage here, but these are key to resolving repetitive stress injuries (RSI) in the arms and hands. Combined with stretches that aim to correct bad postural habits, they can help to ease compressed nerves and increase circulation to tight muscles and connective tissue.

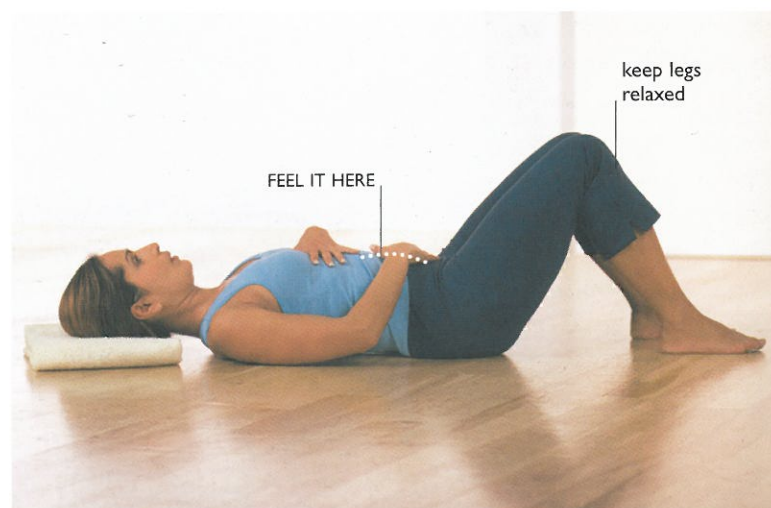
### BALLOONING

This stretches the muscles in the chest and ribcage – consider it to be stretching from the inside out. Keep your back firmly on the floor.

**1** Lie on your back with your knees bent. Place one hand on your lower ribcage, thumb between the breasts, and one on your abdomen, thumb at your navel. Breathe in through your nose as you expand your chest and simultaneously tighten your abdominals.



**2** Breathe out through your mouth as you press down on your breastbone and chest, as if squeezing your chest, while you simultaneously expand your abdomen. Take regular breaths in through your nose, then out through your mouth. Repeat 10 times, and work up to 20 repetitions. Be sure not to “buck” the spine back and forth.



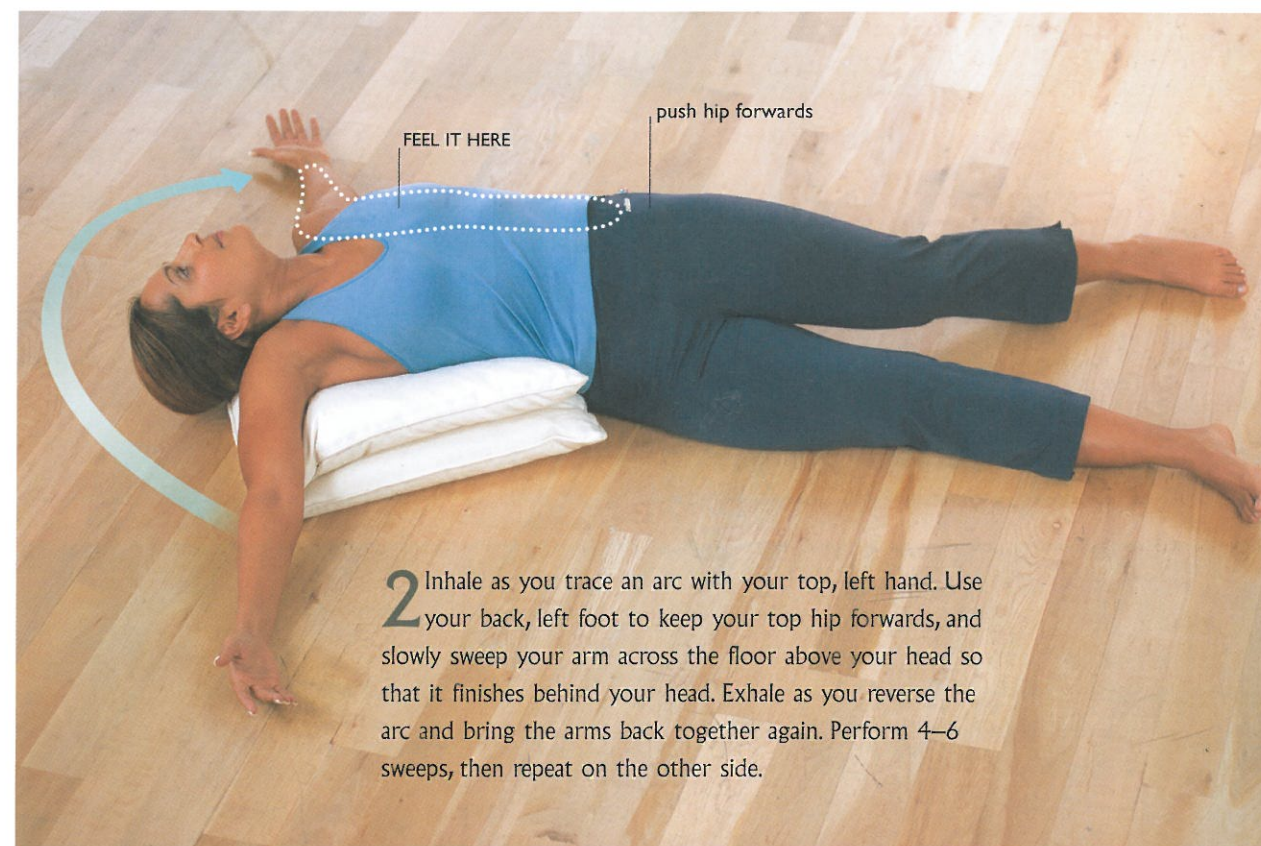
### CAUTIONS AND TIPS

**Anyone performing** repetitive actions with the hands, such as typing, knitting, or gardening, runs the risk of developing RSI. The best prevention is to break the cycle of tension and stress by taking stretching breaks every 30 minutes.

### ARC SWEEP

This opens the muscles in the armpits and the sides of the ribs – stretching these areas can help to prevent RSI problems.

**1** Lie on your right side with a pillow or two under your upper body to raise it off the floor a little. Scissor your legs so that the top, left one is back. Extend your arms in front of you with hands together.



**2** Inhale as you trace an arc with your top, left hand. Use your back, left foot to keep your top hip forwards, and slowly sweep your arm across the floor above your head so that it finishes behind your head. Exhale as you reverse the arc and bring the arms back together again. Perform 4–6 sweeps, then repeat on the other side.

**HAND ROLL**

This stretch helps to preserve shoulder flexibility, which deteriorates over time and can be lost when performing repetitive activities with your arms directly in front. The key is to keep your hands curled throughout the stretch.



**1** Stand up straight, with your feet shoulder-width apart. Hold your hips steady by pulling your navel into your spine and tightening your buttocks. Start with your hands at thigh level, with palms facing out.

**2** Inhale as you roll your arms up until your elbows point forwards. Touch your shoulders with the backs of your fingers.

**3** Continue rolling your hands and arms until your elbows point upwards. Then exhale as you unwind your arms. Start from the shoulders, then slowly lower your elbows, straighten your arms, and uncurl your hands and fingers. Repeat this winding and unwinding 3 times.



**FISH SWIM**

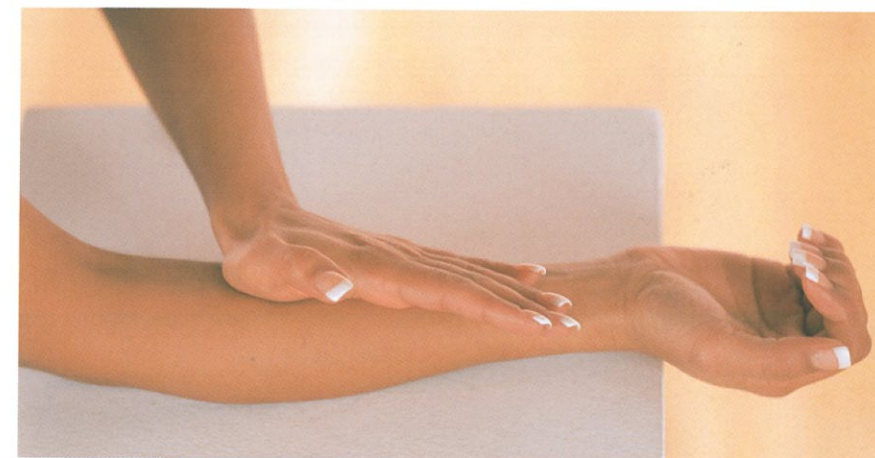
This stretch helps to increase circulation to the nerves in the arms and hands. Be sure to keep your palms together and your shoulders relaxed.



**1** Place your palms together and begin moving your hands as a unit in a horizontal figure-of-eight pattern. Smoothly move your hands down to the left, and then up and around.

**2** Continue moving your hands down to the right, and then up and around again. Let your shoulders and head move naturally with the pattern. Repeat 4 times, then reverse direction.

**ARM PRESS DOWN**



Place your forearm on a firm, flat surface. Place the heel of your other hand on the meaty part of your forearm, just below the elbow, and apply firm pressure. Hold for 4 breath cycles, then repeat on the other arm.

**MINI CATALOGUE**

Include these additional stretches in your routine. Muscle tightness in the face and upper body also affects the arms and hands.



**lion stretch p23**  
say "ahhh" for 5 counts



**arms open p29**  
hold for 3 breath cycles



**clasped fingers p28**  
hold for 3 breath cycles



**twist, arms crossed p33**  
hold for 2 breath cycles; repeat on other side