

5 Must Do

Morning Stretches
for neck, shoulder, and joint pain



ADULT AND PEDIATRIC SERVICES



Reset your morning

Does this sound familiar?

After a night of sleeping soundly, you wake up stiff and sore. You try to move your shoulders or neck, but all you get is shooting pain. Or how about this? You've spent the whole night tossing and turning, trying to find a comfortable position. But between your neck and shoulder pain, you just can't seem to sleep through the night.

In either case, you need to hit a "reset" on your morning. Within this guide, you'll find the top five stretches we recommend to start your day right when you have chronic neck and shoulder pain. We've also included some helpful lifestyle tools and tips to use throughout your day.

Whether your pain is the result of a work-related injury, a chronic condition like cerebral palsy or arthritis, or long-term poor posture, this guide is for you. At Panacea Therapy Co., we're here to help. Start your day right so you can do more of what you love with the people you love, without the pain!

Top Tips for Pain Relief

Before we get into the stretches, let's go over some important tips so you can get the most out of this routine.

Tip 1: Be sure to hold your stretch for a little while (at least 30 seconds). This will help lengthen your muscles, which decreases pain. Pain is often the result of shortened muscles, so you don't want to rush through the routine.

Tip 2: Drink lots of water before and after stretching. When you lengthen your muscles, you can release some toxins into your body. This is nothing to worry about--just drink some water and you'll flush them right out.

Tip 3: For acute (recent) injuries, use ice several times throughout the day. This decreases inflammation, which causes a lot of the initial pain you're feeling.

Tip 4: For long-term injuries, apply heat. Either a heating pad or warm bath should do the trick. Heat increases blood flow to the injured area, which promotes comfort and healing.

Tip 5: You can alternate between ice and heat, but make sure you start with ice. It's important to lower inflammation before trying to heal an injury.

Tip 6: If you're looking for an over-the-counter product, I'd recommend Biofreeze. It's more effective than Bengay, and I've found it has the best results.

Panacea Therapy Co. recommends these tips for all our occupational therapy patients because they work!



The Stretch Guide

Over the years, Panacea Therapy Co's occupational therapists have worked with many different kinds of shoulder and neck injuries. Here are the top five stretches we'd recommend to "reset" your morning and discover a pain-free day:

01

Stretch 1: Across-the-chest stretch

This exercise helps increase flexibility and range of motion in your shoulder joint and the surrounding muscles.

When doing this exercise, lower your arm if you feel any pain in your shoulder.

Bring your right arm across your chest.

Place it in the crease of your left elbow or use your left hand to support your arm.

Hold this position for up to 1 minute. Repeat on the opposite side.

Do each side 3–5 times.

02

Stretch 2: Neck Release

This exercise is a gentle way to loosen tension in your neck and shoulders.

Lower your chin toward your chest. You'll feel a stretch along the back of your neck.

Gently tilt your head to the left to stretch your right shoulder.

Hold this position for up to 1 minute.

Repeat on the opposite side.

Do each side 3–5 times.

To deepen this stretch: Place 1 hand on your shoulder and 1 hand above your ear to gently guide the movement. Lower your chin toward your chest. You'll feel a stretch along the back of your neck. Gently tilt your head to the left to stretch your right shoulder. Hold this position for up to 1 minute. Repeat on the opposite side. Do each side 3–5 times.

03

Stretch 3: Chest expansion

This exercise promotes flexibility and range of motion in your shoulders.

While standing, hold an exercise band, strap, or towel behind your back with both hands.

Broaden across your chest as you move your shoulder blades toward each other.

Lift your chin and look up toward the ceiling. Hold for up to 30 seconds.

Repeat 3–5 times.

05

Stretch 5: Doorway shoulder stretch

This stretch opens your chest and strengthens your shoulders.

Stand in a doorway with your elbows and arms forming a 90-degree angle.

Step your right foot forward as you press your palms into the sides of the door frame.

Lean forward and engage your core.

Hold this position for up to 30 seconds.

Repeat the stretch with your left foot forward.

Do each side 2–3 times.

04

Stretch 4: Seated twist

This exercise stretches your shoulders and neck.

Keep your hips facing forward during this exercise.

Allow the twist to start in your lower back.

Sit in a chair with your ankles directly under your knees.

Twist your upper body to the right, bringing the back of your left hand to your thigh.

Place your right hand down wherever it's comfortable.

Hold this position for up to 30 seconds.

Repeat on the left side.

Do each side 3–5 times.

Go through these stretches every day--even when you're not sure it's helping. Trust us, healing happens through the small, deliberate steps we take. You can do this!

*instructions and graphics are borrowed from Healthline's "Top 10 Exercises to Relieve Shoulder Pain and Tightness."

Make it a lifestyle

While these stretches help you “reset” your morning, your lifestyle can either add to your healing...or undo all the good work you just did. Here are some lifestyle tips our occupational therapists recommend you keep in mind:



Try to reduce the stress in your life.

Try to reduce the stress in your life. I know, it's not as easy as it sounds. But stress contributes to poor posture and increased pain. Work to have good posture throughout the day. Most people sit slumped over, with their neck craning toward the computer and shoulders rounded in. Instead, make sure your shoulders are back and your head is in a neutral position.

(You may need to adjust your workstation to accommodate this good posture.) The same can be said for walking--it's critical to have good posture. Instead of slumped shoulders and head forward, try to keep your eyes straight ahead, your spine in alignment, and your shoulders rolled back.

If you work at a computer,

try to take frequent breaks to stretch. It's the nonmovement that creates stiffness in your joints and muscles. Holding your body in one position for a long time causes inflammation. If you suffer from inflammation, adding turmeric to your diet could help reduce inflammation.

Hot Epsom salt baths are good for shoulder and neck pain. Epsom salts help remove toxins from lactic acid buildup.

By making these tips part of your lifestyle, you can continue healing throughout the day, and possibly prevent further pain and injury!re.)

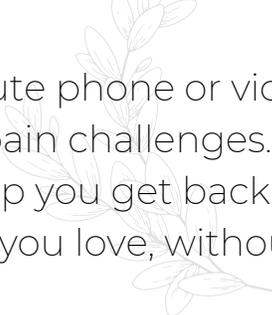


Don't stop at "Reset"

You want to live your day to the fullest. Whether that means doing your job well, playing a killer game of golf, or lifting your grandkids into the air--it's important to take a little time and effort to "reset" your neck and shoulders in the morning. But don't stop there.

At Panacea Therapy Co., we know the challenges you face on a daily basis. That's why we offer proven occupational therapy techniques for our patients. Our insurance-friendly programs will meet you where you are in your pain management journey, and we'll walk with you the rest of the way. If you want to learn more about how you can heal and prevent injury and pain, we'd love to talk.

Sign up for a FREE 15-minute phone or video consultation to get a more individualized look at your pain challenges. You don't have to manage your pain alone. We're here to help you get back to doing what you love with the people you love, without the pain.





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