

The Daily Cat Stretch

Like all somatic exercises, do these movements slowly, gently, and with maximum awareness.

1. **Arch and Flatten**—Lying on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor

Inhale and arch your lower back, then exhale and gradually relax the back. Continue exhaling and flatten your back against the floor, contracting the belly. Gradually relax the belly. Relax completely before starting the next one. Repeat 3-5 times.

2. **Arch and Curl**—Lying on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor, hands interlaced behind your head

Inhale and arch your lower back, then exhale and gradually relax the back. Continue exhaling and flatten your back against the floor, contracting the belly and bringing your head up and elbows toward the knees. Gradually relax the belly and let the head and arms come down and relax completely. Repeat 3-5 times.

3. **Diagonal Airplane**—Lying on your stomach

- a. Head right, with right fingers under your cheek, right elbow straight out from your shoulder. Left arm down by your left side. Lengthen left leg down and then lift head, right hand and elbow, and left leg at the same time. Inhale slowly while lifting. Exhale slowly while coming down. Repeat 2-3 times.

- b. Do the same movement with head left, with left fingers under your cheek, left elbow straight out from your shoulder. Lengthen right leg, then lift head, left hand and elbow, and right leg at the same time. Repeat 2-3 times.

4. **Arch and Diagonal Curl**—Lying on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor

- a. Right hand behind head. Inhale and arch your lower back, pressing into the floor with your right shoulder and left hip, then exhale as you gradually relax the back to neutral. Continue exhaling as you bring your head/right elbow and left knee towards each other, rounding your back against the floor (left hand goes to side of left leg). Inhale as your head, leg, and left hand slowly and gradually come down and the space between your right arm pit and left hip opens up. Repeat 3-5 times.

- b. Same movement with the left hand behind the head and the right hip/knee coming up. Repeat 3-5 times.

5. **Twist**—Lying on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor, arms straight out from the shoulder

Drop your knees to one side, while turning your head to the opposite direction. Simultaneously, roll the arm you're looking at so that the palm is up. Roll the other arm so the palm is down. Slowly bring the knees and head to the other side and reverse the arms. Repeat 4-6 times.

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7. **Leg Inversion and Eversion**—Lying on your back, knees straight, legs on floor
- Invert your right foot and dip right knee, slide foot/leg back to straight, then evert right foot and dip right knee 3-5 times, being sure to lift and arch each side of your back alternately without lifting your shoulder blades. The head turns in the direction of the sole of the moving foot. Repeat with the left leg.
 - Move both legs simultaneously in alternating bow-legged/knock-kneed positions 3-5 times. The back arches with the bow-legged position and flattens against the floor with the knock-kneed position. Legs come straight between movements.
 - Move both legs together in skiing motions 3-5 times (you're inverting one foot while everting the other). Keep feet and knees right together.
8. **Shoulder Rotations**—Sitting
- With both knees bent and facing left (soles of the feet facing right), right hand on left shoulder, and left hand resting on the floor by your side, rotate your trunk to the left 3 times.
 - At the far left rotation, hold your trunk motionless and turn your head to the right and back 3 times.
 - At the far left rotation, put both hands on the floor and turn just your head back to the right. Starting there, simultaneously turn your head and your trunk in opposite directions 3 times.
 - Bring both head and trunk to the far left rotation and lift your face to the ceiling while dropping your eyes to the floor. Gradually lift your eyes while dropping your face downward. Do this 3 times.

Repeat steps a – d, with your knees to the right.

Additional daily exercise (not part of cat stretch)

Alternating Green Light/Red Light—Great for coming back to an easy, balanced and erect posture! Sit as for Arch & Flatten or stand, arms hanging loosely by your sides

As you inhale, contract the muscles of your back, including the neck and the buttocks. Your thighs might want to turn out a bit and your head will tilt back a little. Let the arms externally rotate so that your shoulder blades come together more. As you exhale, gradually come out of this full body extension (Green Light posture), through, neutral, then forward into flexion (Red Light posture). Your head is forward, shoulders rounded forward and belly contracted. Thighs might also want to pull inward a little. As you inhale, gradually go through neutral and back into Green Light, but a little less than before. As you exhale, gradually go through neutral and back into Red Light, but a little less. Slowly go back and forth, making your movements smaller and smaller, till after the last Green Light, you easily relax into a neutral posture.