

## SIMPLE, EFFECTIVE STRETCHING

### RULES OF THE STRETCHING GAME:

- **Where you think the problem is – it ain't!**

Sore muscles are usually already overstretched and overloaded. Whilst stretching them further can feel good in the moment, it increases the likelihood that they will keep hurting into the future. It is best to focus on stretching the shortened opposite muscles that are responsible for overloading the sore ones.
- **Stretch the front**

The habits of modern life, (eg sitting /working at a computer / smart phone use / driving), tend to shorten the muscles on the front of your body. Whilst 90% of people's body pain tends to be on the back of their body, most of the time this is due to the tension from the shortened front muscles.
- **Don't be insane!**

Einstein's definition of insanity was to "keep doing the same thing over and over again and expect a different outcome." If you have been stretching a sore muscle for ages and it hasn't improved – stop and stretch the opposite! E.g. tight hamstrings – stretch the quadriceps (front of thighs). E.g. pain between the shoulder blades – stretch the pecs (front of chest).
- **Stretch very gently**

If you pull on a muscle with any more than 2-3% of its total power, then it starts to contract to protect itself. This is governed by an automatic spinal reflex, ("the stretch reflex"), which you can't easily over-ride.

Therefore, as soon as you stretch with any power, you end up in a tug-of-war with yourself and any stretching benefit is lost. Only very gentle stretches avoid the stretch reflex and allow useful benefit. Commit to a 2-3 minute stretch for any single stretch that you perform. This will remove any temptation to go too hard.
- **Lazy stretching**

The best stretches are ones that use your body weight and gravity to slowly stretch the target tissue. Avoid having to contract one muscle to stretch another.
- **Listen to your body first and last!**

If you perform a stretch, (or other exercise), and it doesn't feel right, then stop doing it. This holds true regardless of who has recommended the activity.

Dr. Chris Homan

MBBS FRACGP FACRRM DRANZCOG PGDipMSM(Otago)

*This information sheet is designed as general advice only and does not take into account specific patient circumstances. It should not replace individual assessment by a health practitioner.*

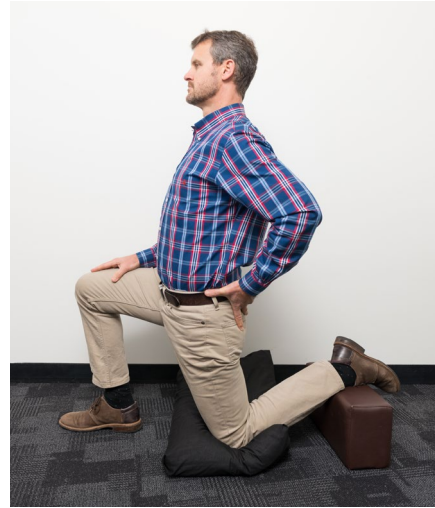
# THE TOP 4 STRETCHES



1. DOORWAY STRETCH  
(PEC MAJOR)



2. PENGUIN STRETCH  
(PEC MAJOR & MINOR)



3. KNEELING ARCHER  
(QUADRICEPS & HIP FLEXOR)



4. INELEGANT LOO STRETCH  
(SHORT ADDUCTORS)