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Posture Improvement Exercises

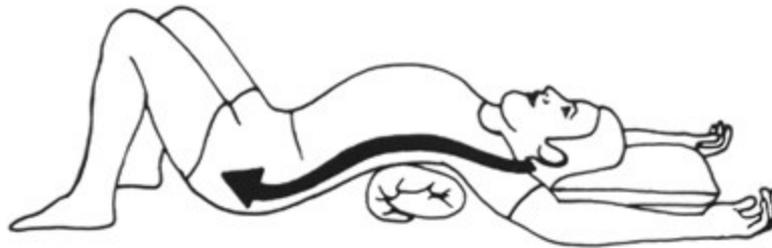
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IMPORTANT: Exercise GENTLY. If you push too hard you will hurt yourself and your health will go backwards. Progress is the benefits your body receives from increased circulation while performing each exercise through regular daily practice, not how far you can stretch. Immediately stop any exercise if it causes or increases pain. Begin exercises the DAY AFTER your Bowen treatment.

This posture exercise stretches the upper back and spine opposite to the normal direction of its curve. This helps lessen the often excessive forward curve of the upper back, limbers the shoulder joints, and opens the chest.

1. Back Position

Roll up a blanket tightly and place it on the floor. Lie over the blanket so that it is just below the top of the shoulders. Lengthen the spine by tucking the pelvis forward to straighten the lower spine against the floor, and tuck the chin in to lengthen the back of the neck. If there is any discomfort in the back, the blanket is too high. See picture.



2. Neck Support

If there is any discomfort in the neck after tucking in the chin and elongating the back of the neck; it is essential to place the head on another blanket or cushion. This extra neck support should be lower than the one under your back, but high enough to eliminate any neck strain and allow you to feel that the back of the neck is lengthening.

As you practice over time and gradually increase the height of the rolled-up blanket, it may be necessary to use a neck support, even though one was not needed when you used a lower rolled-up blanket. This is particularly true in the first position when the blanket is just below the top of the shoulders.

3. Arms

Slowly bring the arms back to rest on the floor above the head with the elbows well bent. Only do this if it can be done without strain. If bringing the arms back causes discomfort, they can remain at the sides, or be brought back only so far as produces stretch without strain. If brought back only part way, the arms can either be held there or placed on a cushion, piece of furniture or other prop. As the shoulder joints become more limber, the arms can be brought lower. As the arms are brought back, be sure to continue keeping the shoulder blades dropped and widened.

4. Breathing

While relaxing in this posture, breathe deeply and slowly, directing the breath to fill the chest rather than expand the abdomen. You will feel each inhale greatly increases the stretch of the spine and chest. If necessary, hold the abdomen in while inhaling so that chest expansion can occur. It may seem very difficult initially to breathe up into the chest while practising this exercise, but practice will be rewarded by a great deal of structural opening in the chest and upper back.

5. Several Positions for Blanket

In order to limber the whole upper spine and shoulder joints practice this exercise in each of the following positions. **DO NOT practice with the blanket below (lower down the body) than the bottom of the sternum, or any higher than level with the top of the shoulders.**

First position: The blanket is beneath the tops of the shoulders.

Second position: The blanket is beneath the middle of the chest.

Third position: The blanket is beneath the bottom of the sternum.

6. Time/Resting between Positions

Remain in each position for several minutes or more if you are comfortable. Most people find this exercise very pleasant from the beginning: similar to getting a back massage. If this exercise is initially a difficult stretch for you, leave the position and rest before continuing to the next position. Once this exercise is easy and pleasant, you can shift from first to second to third positions on the blanket without coming up first.

7. Leaving the Position

To get up after this exercise, use your hand to lift your head to a chin-on-chest position, then roll off the blanket to one side before sitting up. This will prevent strain on the neck or back. Bend over forward and relax afterwards.