

Here are some helpful hints when doing the stretching exercises in or out of the shower

- ◆ Before doing the shower exercises, make sure you have a rubber mat or strips on the floor of the shower or tub for safe footing.
- ◆ Focus the shower head on the area you are stretching.
- ◆ Focus your eyes straight ahead, whenever possible.
- ◆ Check posture! As described in *The Miracle Diamond* and in the illustration on the right. Chest high, rib cage lifted and upper back elongated.
- ◆ Don't rush...a little stretch goes a long way. Stretch both sides equally. Expect to increase flexibility gradually.
- ◆ Move into a stretch until you feel mild tension, then hold the stretch 5-10 seconds. Stop if you experience pain. Always listen to your body. Repeat each stretch as necessary. Be slow and gentle.
- ◆ With each exercise, concentrate on whether you are working upper torso or lower torso; working one while keeping the other from moving. This will give you the best possible stretch and work into the muscles that define your waistline.
- ◆ Include the rhythmic breathing pattern to get the most benefit from each stretch.



*** Rhythmic Breathing**

Here's the pattern, using imagery as you practice

To prepare: inhale slowly through your nose as though smelling a delicious fragrance. Inhaling brings oxygen and energy to the muscles.

Exhale slowly through your mouth as though blowing tiny bubbles. Exhaling releases energy; muscles relax, spine is more flexible, allowing the body to bend, turn and twist with minimum effort and maximum results.

An easy way to remember the breathing pattern is this:

Inhale to prepare, exhale 'til you're there.

If you are uncomfortable using a breathing pattern while stretching in the shower, use it when doing floor stretches. **If you are unsure if these stretches are appropriate for you, check with your doctor or physical therapist before you begin.**

Shower Stretches as illustrated in pictures 1-9

The series was designed to be done in sequence, hold all stretches for 5 - 10 seconds.

1. BEGIN THE DAY ►

One of the best exercises, not only stretches the neck, arms, shoulders and back and compensates for slouching shoulders, but is a wonderful reminder to be posture-aware. Do this one in a shower with the warm water focused on the your upper back. Breathe normally throughout the exercise.

- ◆ Stand with feet firmly planted on the floor, knees flexed. Tuck chin in slightly without lowering your head, to relax and align neck muscles. Keep the chest high and the back elongated. Squeeze buttocks together to align pelvis. This will stabilize body weight for better balance.
- ◆ Place arms in back, resting on buttocks.
- ◆ Clasp hands and pull arms down until elbows are straight. Holding that position, lift arms up and away from your body until shoulder blades squeeze together. Now unclasp hands, relax shoulders and enjoy the feeling of good posture.



Neck muscles hold a great deal of tension. The next two exercises will relax and stretch those muscles so that head and shoulders can move freely.