

# MOBILITY Exercises

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(Ron Jones, MS, ACSM Health/Fitness Instructor, Corporate Wellcoach)



**Mobility:** There is a “*Magic to Movement*” in my opinion; we are made to MOVE! *Mobility is simply defined as the degree of freedom of movement around a joint or body segment.* Mobility is a balance of flexibility, strength, and uninhibited motion. Along with balance and core stability, ***mobility should be a primary goal of functional movement!*** Simple “flexibility” of muscles and tendons does not necessarily mean that you have proper joint mobility and the ability to move efficiently in the hips, shoulders, spine, and other body joints. The exercises below are highly productive for increasing joint mobility with simple movement; these are NOT static stretching exercises where you “hold” the stretch—these exercises are non-stop dynamic movements. ***The most productive exercises in my opinion are marked\*.*** ☺

**Directions:** If you need extra help with joint mobility, these exercises can be performed *in addition to a Dynamic Warm-Up.* In general, mobility exercises can be *performed daily* unless acute pain arises. They are designed to “open you up” for healthy joint movements without pain. At first some might “hurt” because your joints are tight—modify as needed by decreasing range of motion, repetitions, intensity, or duration. Do not “force” the exercises or ranges of motion thus causing more harm—do what is reasonable so you can facilitate weekly improvement, increase your health, and enhance movement.

**Dynamic Warm-Up Exercises:** I recommend that everyone performs a *Dynamic Warm-Up* daily—this is fundamental to improving your function based on my experiences. “*Dynamic*” Warm-Ups are designed to increase mobility, flexibility, and stability of joints and core while improving your ability to move properly without pain. If you do nothing else for your body—at least perform a *Dynamic Warm-Up* daily to keep your body moving as well as possible.

## UPPER BODY

### **Alternate Arm Raise** (5-10x each side)

- Stand upright; straighten arm at elbow with palms next to outer thigh facing backwards; from bottom position lift one arm at a time straight forward directly over shoulder; alternate.

### **Arm Press** (5-10x each side)

- Stand upright; flex elbows & bring hands in front of shoulders; press & “reach” one arm straight up & directly over shoulder; alternate.

### **Behind Back Reach** (3-5x each side)

- With one hand & arm, reach back & over shoulder towards mid-back; with other hand & arm, reach back & up under the arm pit towards mid-back; try touching fingertips of both hands together; alternate. If you can’t touch, reach as far as possible without unhealthy pain.

### **Cat/Camel\*** ☺ (10-20x)

- Get on ground on all fours; place hands under shoulders & knees under hips; arch back “like a cat” as you drop head and tuck hips under lower torso then sag back “like in-between the humps of a camel” as you lift head & roll hips out from under lower torso. *Do not flex elbows as you move!* The movement should come from the spinal column only.

### **Dynamic Warm-Ups\*** ☺ (Levels I & II)

- See separate handouts & web directions.

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## **Head Turn\*** ☺ (5-10x each side)

- Stand upright & “tall” with good posture; turn head & neck ONLY as you look over one shoulder as far as possible without compensation; pause briefly; alternate. Do NOT compensate for tight neck by twisting whole body.

## **Head Tilt** (5-10x each side)

- Stand upright & “tall” with good posture; tilt head straight to one side & directly over one shoulder; pause briefly; alternate.

## **Head ½ Roll** (3-5x each side)

- Stand upright & “tall” with good posture; tilt head straight to one side & directly over one shoulder then slowly roll or “slide” chin & head down off shoulder towards center of chest & back to opposing shoulder; pause briefly; repeat going other direction.

## **Jacks Without Jumps!** (5-10x)

- Stand upright with palms pressing into outer thighs; swing straight arms up directly over head & slap palms together; take palms back to starting position on thighs; repeat.

## **Lateral Reach** (5-10x each side)

- Stand upright; place arms at sides with palms facing in towards thighs; without slouching forward, bend spine laterally, or “straight over” to one side & reach hand down leg towards knee & lower leg; stand back upright; alternate.

## **Press Up\*** ☺ (10-20x)

- Lie on stomach; gently press up your back into mild hyperextension. When you feel your hips start to lift off ground—stop—then go back down; repeat. Movements should flow together non-stop.

## **Reach, Roll, Lift\*** ☺ (10x each side)

- Sit back on heels & reach overhead with straight arms as far as possible; roll one palm straight up towards ceiling then lift from shoulder joint ONLY—*do NOT flex elbow, bend spine, or move hips*; repeat all reps without pause.

## **Scare Crow\*** ☺ (8-10x each side)

- Stand upright; bring upper arms out parallel to ground while rotating one forearm straight up & the other forearm straight down; each elbow should have a 90° angle; rotate each arm into the opposite position without dropping elbows while maintaining the 90° angle in each elbow; alternate.

## **Shoulders Back & Down** (5-10x)

- Stand upright & “tall” with good posture; slightly lift shoulders as you roll them back and down and “pinch” shoulder blades together; relax & drop shoulders; repeat.

## **Shoulder Tap** (5-10x)

- Stand upright; swing both arms across front of body while tapping each shoulder with the opposite hand; quickly reach out & open arms wide; repeat as you change position of top arm with each rep (right over left then left over right). Do a few opening straight across body then do alternating “diagonals” as you open up in a ‘X’ pattern (right arm high with left arm low then right arm low with left arm high).

## **Standing Y, T, W, & L** (5-8x)

- **Y & T:** Bend over at waist with 45° angle; straighten arms at elbows with arms hanging directly below shoulders; quickly raise straight arms with “thumbs pointed up”; repeat all reps in shape of ‘Y’ then do all reps in shape of ‘T.’
- **W:** Stand upright; bend elbows & bring arms in front of chest; pull arms back as you pinch shoulder blades together; repeat. This exercise looks like a bird flapping its wings.
- **L:** Stand upright; bring upper arms & elbows into alignment with shoulders as you rotate forearms straight up towards ceiling while maintaining a 90° bend in elbows; rotate forearms down towards ground while keeping upper arms and elbows even with shoulders & 90° bend in elbows; repeat.

## **Swim Stroke** (5-10x each side)

- Stand upright; straighten arms then swing arms forward in big circles with full range of motion. Do NOT bend elbow with each stroke—the movement should come from the shoulder joint; repeat all reps forward then reverse for “backstroke” reps using technique above.

## **90/90** (5-10x each side)

- Lie on side with arms pointed forward in front of chest and top leg bent at 90° angle; pull top arm up and over behind back as you follow hand with head and rotate spine; repeat.

## LOWER BODY

### **Heisman** (5-10x each side)

- Stand upright; quickly pull knee up & across front of body towards opposing hand; repeat.

### **Knee Hug** (5-10x each side)

- Stand upright; quickly pull knee straight up then “hug” knee bringing it closer towards chest; alternate.

### **Leg Swing** (3-5x each angle)

- Stand upright; assume 1-leg balance stance then swing one leg straight up & back with knee straight; repeat. Do all reps with one angle before changing positions i.e. straight up & back, front 45°, side 90°, back 45° then go to other side.

### **Overhead Reach Squat\*** ☺ (5-10x)

- Stand upright with feet slightly wider than shoulders & *pointed perfectly straight forward*; look directly forward; begin lowering into squat while *keeping head & chest up* as you keep *feet flat on ground & pointed forward*; as you squat reach up & over each shoulder with straight arms; stand & lower arms; repeat.

### **Stationary Lunge** (5-10x each side)

- Stand upright then step one leg into lunge position with *knee directly over front ankle*; lower hips with upper body staying in upright position until you have a “box” shape under front leg with a 90° angle in front knee; stand back up without moving feet; repeat all reps on one side before changing sides.

➤ See my website “**BodyX**” section for more **Body Weight Exercise** info and photo directions.

\* Ron Jones (9.4.07)