

# Stretching Exercises for Wheelchair Users

## ❑ Elbow Pull

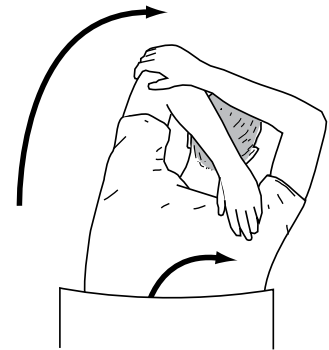
- Hold your left elbow with your right hand.
- Gently pull your elbow behind your head until an easy stretch is felt in your shoulder or the back of your upper arm (triceps).
- Repeat exercise for your other arm.



## ❑ Elbow Pull and Lean

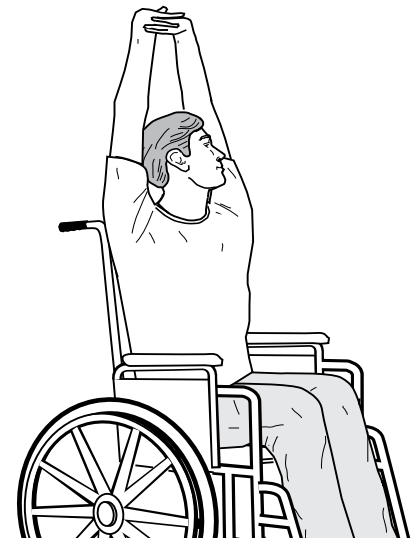
- Begin with the same stretch as above, now gently pull your elbow behind your head until an easy stretch is felt.
- Gently lean sideways from your hips to stretch along the side of your upper body.

**Caution:** Trunk weakness may require you to use a safety strap or for someone to watch you to prevent falls during this stretch.



## ❑ Palms Up

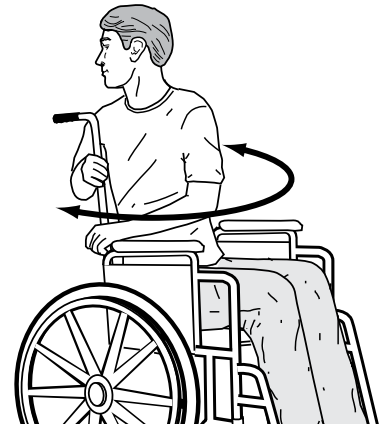
- Interlace your fingers from one hand with those of your opposite hand.
- Raise your arms above your head with your palms facing up.
- Push your arms slightly back and up. Feel the stretch in your arms, shoulders and upper back.



## ❑ Over the Shoulder

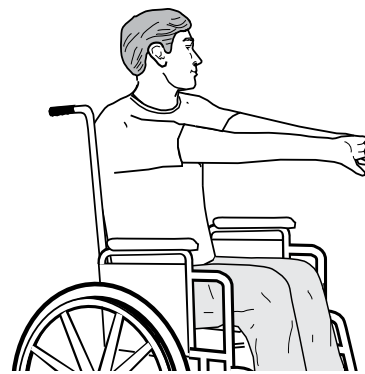
- Keeping your hips straight ahead in the chair, turn your upper body to the right and then to the left.
- Turn so you are looking over your shoulder. This exercise will create a stretch in your back and sides.

**Caution:** Persons with spine-stabilizing hardware, such as Harrington Rods, may be restricted in twisting. Persons with chest or back injuries should have their doctor's approval before doing this exercise.



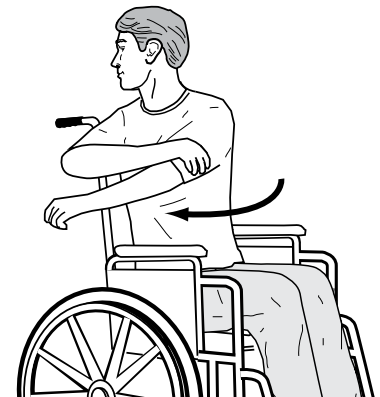
## ❑ Palms Forward

- Interlace your fingers with your palms facing out and your arms extended out in front of you at shoulder height.
- Extend your arms forward to stretch your shoulders, mid-upper back, arms, hand, fingers and wrists.



## ❑ Elbow Across

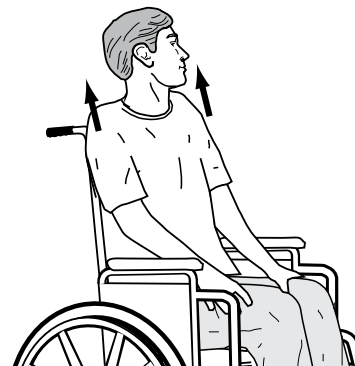
- Pull your elbow gently across your chest toward your opposite shoulder until you feel a comfortable stretch.
- Repeat with your other elbow.



## ❑ Shoulder Shrug

This stretch is good for relieving stiffness and tension in the shoulders and neck.

- Pull the top of your shoulders up towards your earlobes and hold for 5 to 8 seconds.
- Relax completely and allow your shoulders to drop down naturally.
- Repeat this several times.



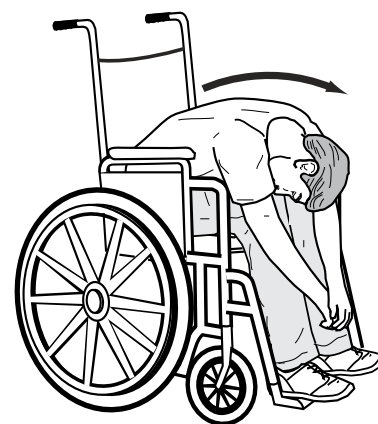
## ❑ Head Tilt

- Use good posture while sitting in the chair.
- Tilt your head to the left side, and at the same time, allow your right shoulder to move downward. This will create a stretch along the side of your neck.
- Repeat on the other side.



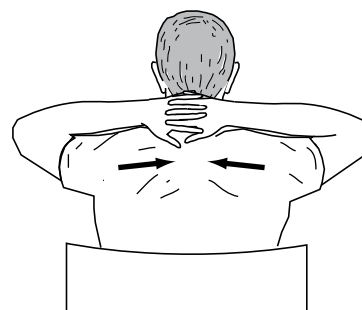
## ❑ Forward Body Bend

- Bend forward to stretch the areas from your neck through your lower back. This is also a good weight shift position and may be done with a pillow on your lap.
- Find a comfortable position and hold it for about 1 to 2 minutes.
- To sit up, put your hands on your thighs and push your upper body to an upright position.



## ❑ Shoulder Blades Together

- Interlace your fingers behind your head, keeping your elbows straight out to your sides. Keep your upper body in an upright position in the center.
- Pull your shoulder blades together to create a feeling of tension through your upper back and shoulder blades.
- Hold this tension for 8 to 12 seconds and then relax.
- Repeat several times.



## ❑ Neck Stretch

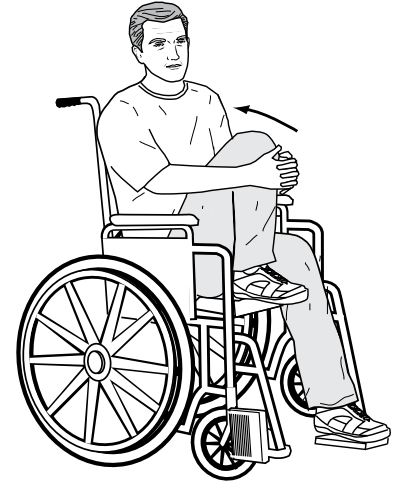
- Sitting in an upright position in the center of your chair, interlace your fingers on the back of your head.
- Gently pull your head downward until you feel a slight stretch in the back of your neck.



**Caution:** Persons with cervical spine injuries should have their doctor's approval before doing this stretch.

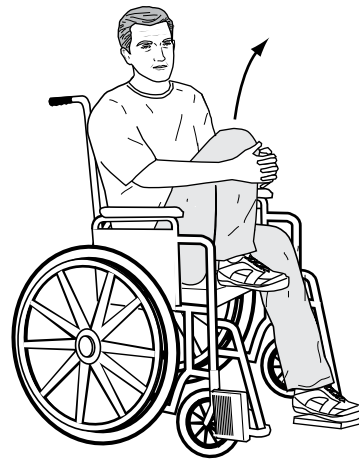
### ❑ Knee to Chest

- Pull your knee toward your chest until you feel an easy stretch.
- Hold this easy stretch until the tension disappears, and then stretch a little further until you feel a mild, comfortable tension again.
- Repeat for your other leg.



### ❑ Knee Across

- Pull your knee across your body toward your opposite shoulder to stretch the outside of your upper leg.
- Hold this for 30 to 40 seconds.
- Repeat for your other leg.



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**Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.