

Stretching Exercises for Wheelchair Users

❑ Stretch 1

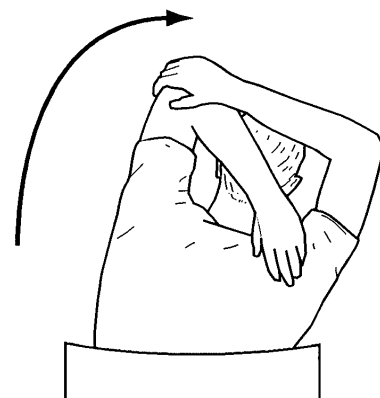
Hold left elbow with right hand. Gently pull elbow behind your head until an easy stretch is felt in the shoulder or back of your upper arm (triceps). Repeat exercise for other arm.



❑ Stretch 2

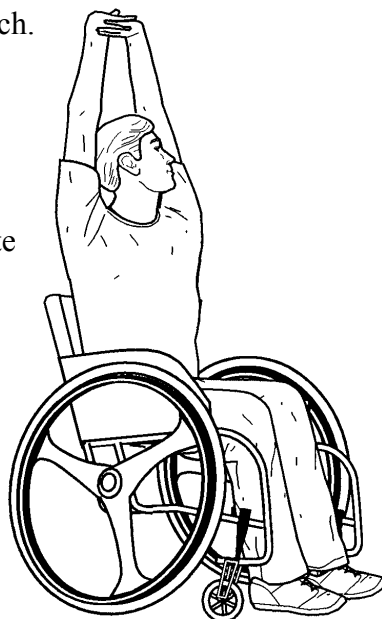
Begin with Stretch 1, and gently pull your elbow behind your head until an easy stretch is felt. Gently lean sideways from your hips to stretch along the side of your upper body.

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



❑ Stretch 3

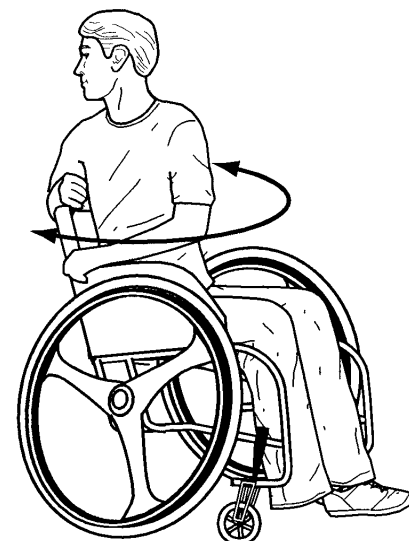
Interlace your fingers from one hand with those of your opposite hand. Raise your arms above your head with your palms facing up. Push your arms slightly back and up. Feel the stretch in your arms, shoulders, and upper back.



❑ Stretch 4

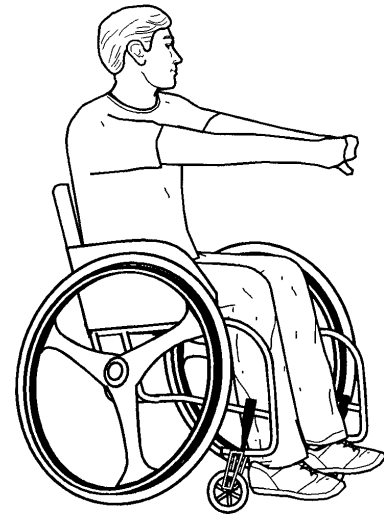
Keeping your hips straight ahead in the chair, turn your upper body to the right and then to the left. Turn so you are looking over your shoulder. This exercise will create a stretch in your back and sides.

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.



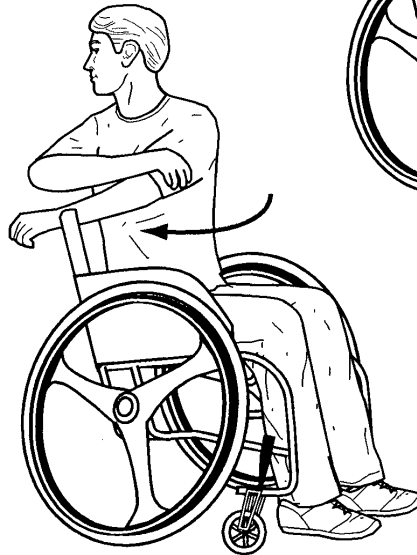
❑ Stretch 5

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



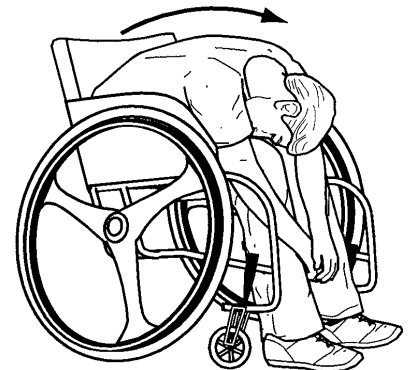
❑ Stretch 6

Another stretch for the shoulder and mid-upper back is to pull your elbow gently across your chest toward the opposite shoulder until a comfortable stretch is reached.



❑ Stretch 7

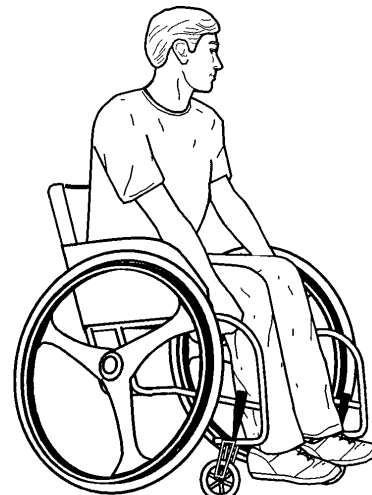
- Bend forward to stretch the areas from the neck through the lower back. This is also a good weight shift position and may be done with a pillow on your lap.
- Find a comfortable position and hold it for about 1 - 2 minutes.
- To sit up, put your hand on your thighs and push your upper body to an upright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



❑ Stretch 8

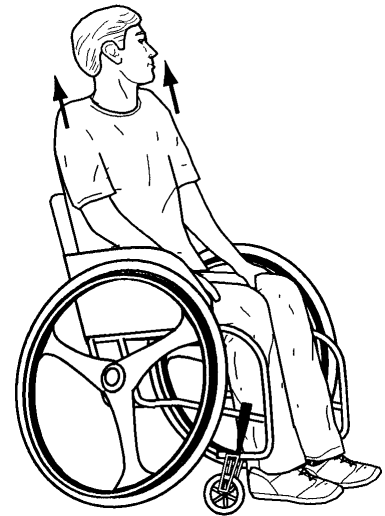
Start with your arms straight, palms flat on the chair seat, and your thumbs on the outside with your fingers pointed back. In this position, slowly lean back to stretch the forearm, keeping your palms flat.

Caution: This exercise is not recommended for quadriplegics who have a tenodesis grip. This stretch may reduce the function of the grip by stretching out the fingers.



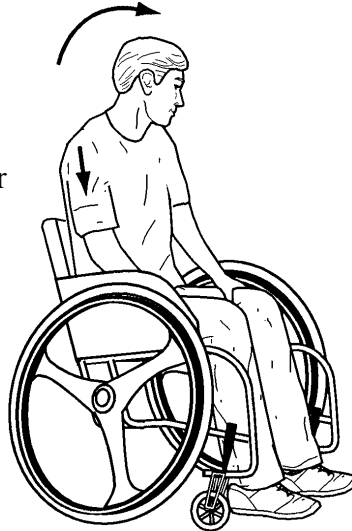
❑ Stretch 9

The shoulder shrug 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 - 8 seconds. Relax completely and allow your shoulders to drip down naturally. Repeat this several times.



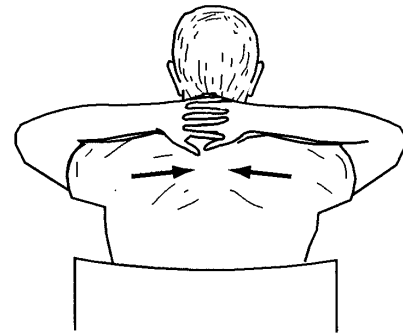
❑ Stretch 10

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 exercise will create a stretch along the side of the neck. Repeat on the other side.



❑ Stretch 11

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



❑ Stretch 12

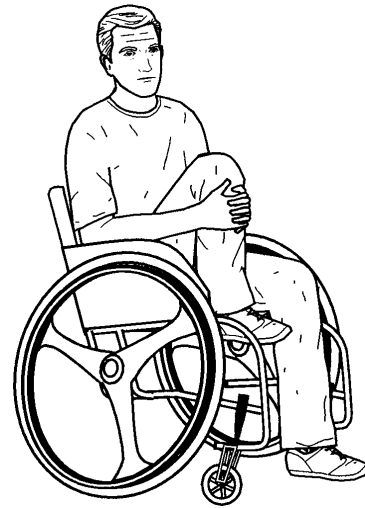
Sitting in an upright, central position, interlace your fingers on the back of your head. Gently pull your head downward until a slight stretch is felt in the back of the neck.

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



□ **Stretch 13**

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



□ **Stretch 14**

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



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