



The Complete Healthy Back System

BACK TO LIFE



The Ten Minute Chair Routine
Companion Manual

This book is dedicated

To You

Introduction

Welcome to the Back to Life, Ten Minute Chair Routine Companion Manual. This manual is meant to be a handy complement to your Back to Life video and I recommend that you watch the video first to learn the exercises. Once you feel comfortable with the form, you can start to do the routines on your own and use this manual as a portable and quick reference guide.

If you are reading this right now, chances are that you are like the many people who have suffered from back pain and struggled for a while to find relief. I know how frustrating and downright depressing it can be to live with pain and even start to lose hope. However, I want you to know that I have been where you are. I suffered from back pain for many years and I tried many treatments that failed. When I was told that I needed back surgery at the age of 28 I was terrified. But thankfully, when I was at my lowest point, I discovered this method which has kept me pain-free for almost a decade. And it hasn't worked for just me. I have worked with countless numbers of clients who have also experienced the amazing pain-relieving results from these simple, therapeutic movements. After seeing so many people recover from pain I am a true believer that sometimes the easiest answer is the best one.

This program is designed to move your back and your body in a way that creates flexibility and stability. You will increase core strength to support your spine, while keeping your back limber. You will also be able to sit and stand more easily because these exercises will improve your posture. It is important to follow the breathing instructions with each movement because when you combine breath and movement, it not only helps you engage the muscles in a more effective way, it also allows you to release stress and relieve sore tight muscles.

Think of this routine as your all-natural solution for tight achy muscles. When you feel yourself becoming sore or stiff, give yourself a break to indulge in some of these stretches. Sometimes the hardest part about this routine is just remembering to do it, so think about setting a reminder on your phone or leaving a note up in your home or at work to remind you to take a quick ten-minute break for the sake of your back.

I am thrilled for you to begin this program and I can't wait to hear about your experience as you get back to life!

-Emily

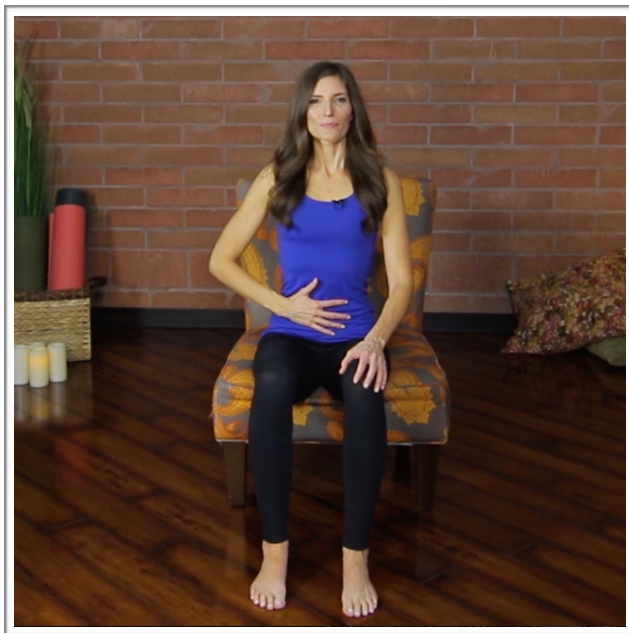
The Pain-Relieving Power of Your Mind

One of the greatest gifts you can give to your body starts with your mind. If you have been in pain for a while, it is normal for your mind to start fixating on it. In fact, it is part of our body's natural survival method. Pain attracts our thoughts so that we can make sure to move away from it and keep our bodies safe. But when it comes to back pain, this can actually make the problem worse. The more we think about our pain, the more our muscles start to tighten up. This causes more aches and stiffness and it actually hurts our body's natural healing ability by restricting blood flow.

One of the most powerful pain relief techniques I have ever practiced is simply learning how to direct where I put my attention. This means that rather than focusing on and thinking about the parts of my body that hurt, I intentionally start to think about and notice all of the parts of my body that are pain-free. Sometimes it is as simple as thinking about and wiggling my toes or brushing my fingertips together. This helps to distract my mind from the places that hurt and I instantly start to feel better. The more I do this, the better and better I feel.

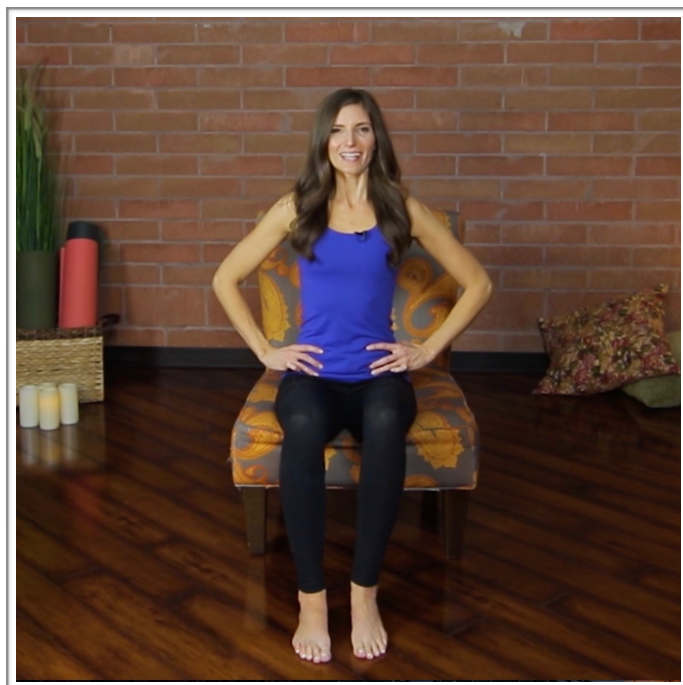
Even when you are experiencing the worst back pain, there is a good chance that overall there are still more parts of your body that are pain-free. Pain can be all-consuming and it can become the only thing we notice. But try to keep your attention focused on all of the parts of your body that feel okay. Don't let the pain define you. It can still be there, but don't let it dominate your thoughts. As you do this, try to take calm deep breaths through your nose and notice if you can allow your muscles to melt a little bit. Anything you can do to relax your mind and your body will help you move away from the pain.

Engaging Your Core



Come to the edge of your chair and sit up nice and tall. Plant your feet on the floor about hips width apart. Place one hand low on your stomach, at or below your belly button. Take a deep breath in through your nose and then as you exhale, feel your navel drawing in toward your spine and up toward your ribcage. As you take your next breath try to hold your belly in firm. You will feel your breath expanding wide into your chest and ribcage, but don't let it expand down into your abdomen. Draw your stomach in tighter every time you exhale and keep it in tight every time you inhale.

Bring your hands onto the front of your hip bones and walk your finger tips in toward each other slightly. They should be just inside your hip crests (the front of your hips) on your low belly. Use your fingertips to dig in and feel your lower abdominal muscles. Take an exhale and imagine you could use these muscles to draw your hip bones in toward each other. Your hips will not move but you should feel the low belly muscles drawing inward. Keep the shoulders relaxed and allow the breath to fill wide into your chest and ribcage, but keep the low belly drawn in tight.



You will start to feel your abdominal muscles working just by sitting and breathing this way. This is the feeling of your core engaging. Try to remember to engage your core all day. By simply engaging the core muscles as you move throughout the day, you can exercise your core with every daily movement you make. Try to remember to contract your core when doing the following activities:

Walking

Sitting at Your Desk or Table

Emptying the Dishwasher

Emptying the Dryer

Washing the Shower or Bathtub

Getting In and Out of Your Car

Getting Up From the Couch

Bending Over to Tie Shoes, Put on Pants or Pick Something Up

Simple Core 1 - 2 - 3

As you exhale, do the first of these three steps. Hold the position as you inhale. Do the next step with the next exhale. Hold with the inhale. Repeat for all steps.

1. Draw the low belly back toward the spine.
2. Lift the belly button up toward the ribcage like an elevator
3. Imagine you can use your low abdominal muscles to draw your hip bones toward each other and try to squeeze them in tight.

Core Exercise One: Knee Lifts

Sitting tall, bring your hands onto your hips with your fingers pointing inward on your low belly. Take a deep breath in and as you exhale, draw your belly button in and up. Use your fingertips to tap or gently dig in to your low belly muscles right inside the front of your hip crests, below your belly button. Take a moment to wake these muscles up.

Holding your belly in tight, inhale again. Exhale and lift your right knee. Feel your right lower abdominal muscles working to lift the leg. Lower the right leg as you inhale and lift your left knee as you exhale - contract the lower left abdominals. Try to keep your weight evenly balanced on your hips rather than leaning from one side to the next.

Repeat this marching movement from side to side for 10 rounds on each side.



Tips:

Keep the spine tall. Try not to let your back lean or round as you lift each leg. Try to relax the shoulders down away from the ears - you don't need their help for this one.

Imagine your abdominal muscles are working as a lever to lift your leg. The exhale powers the lever.

Tuck the chin slightly or bring your jawline parallel with the floor so that the back of your neck is long.

Core Exercise Two: Knee Hold

Keeping the core engaged tight, take a deep breath in and exhale to lift the right knee as high as you can. Hold the knee up and take 3-5 deep breaths. Try to keep your hips even and avoid sagging or leaning into your right hip. Draw your ribcage up away from your hips and continue to sit up tall. Repeat this on the left side.



Tips:

Take deep full breaths into the ribs and chest.

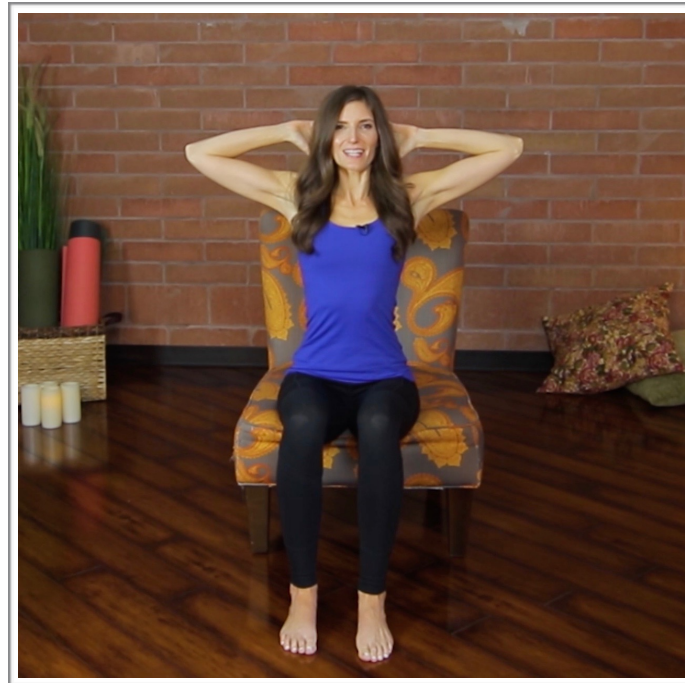
Tighten your stomach muscles more and more with every exhale.

Relax your jaw and forehead.

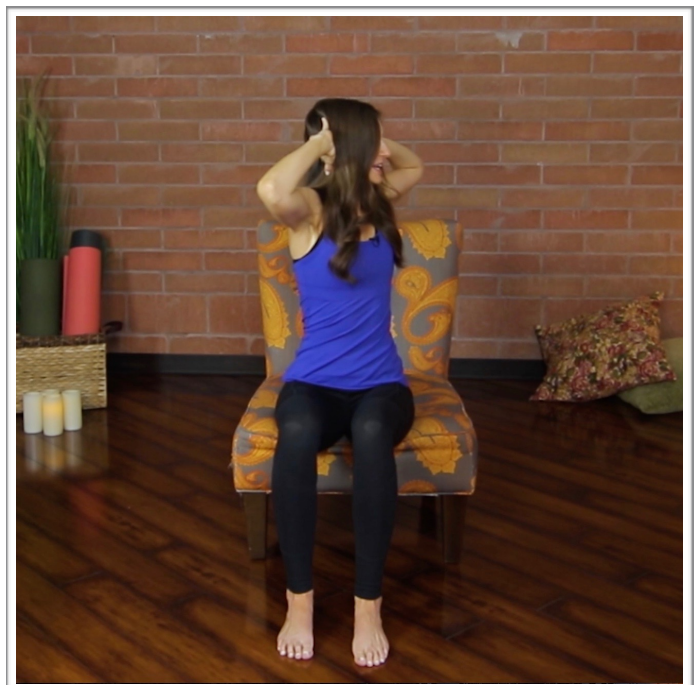
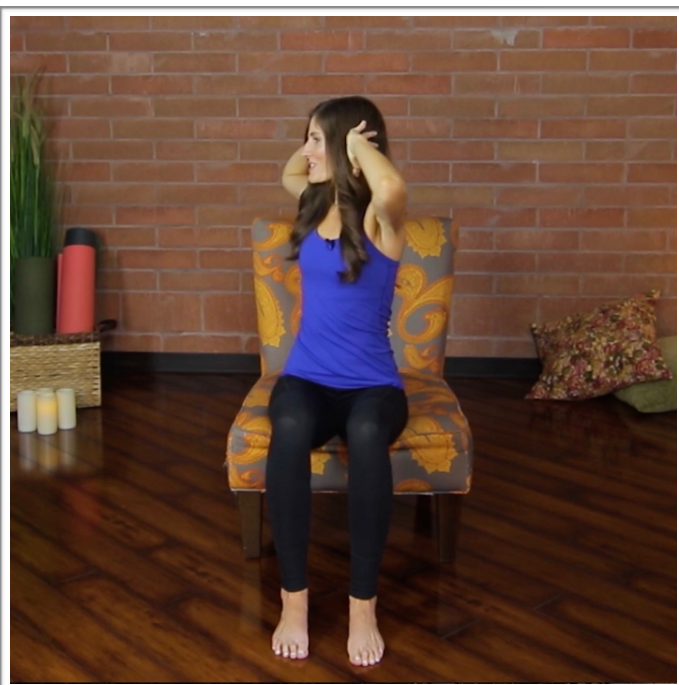
Keep your posture tall and strong.

Core Exercise Three: Oblique Twists

Place your feet on the floor, hips width apart, and sit up nice and tall. Gently bring your hands behind your head and open your elbows wide.



Take a deep breath in and twist to the right as you take three pulsing exhales. Inhale back to center and exhale to take three pulsing twists to the left. Repeat ten times on each side.



Try to sit up taller and taller every time you come through center, and maintain that length in your spine as you twist. Keep your core muscles drawn in tight. Imagine you are wringing out your abdominal muscles the way you would wring out a wet rag every time you twist.



Tips:

Keep your hips still and grounded into the chair as you twist.

Avoid letting your lower ribcage pop forward.

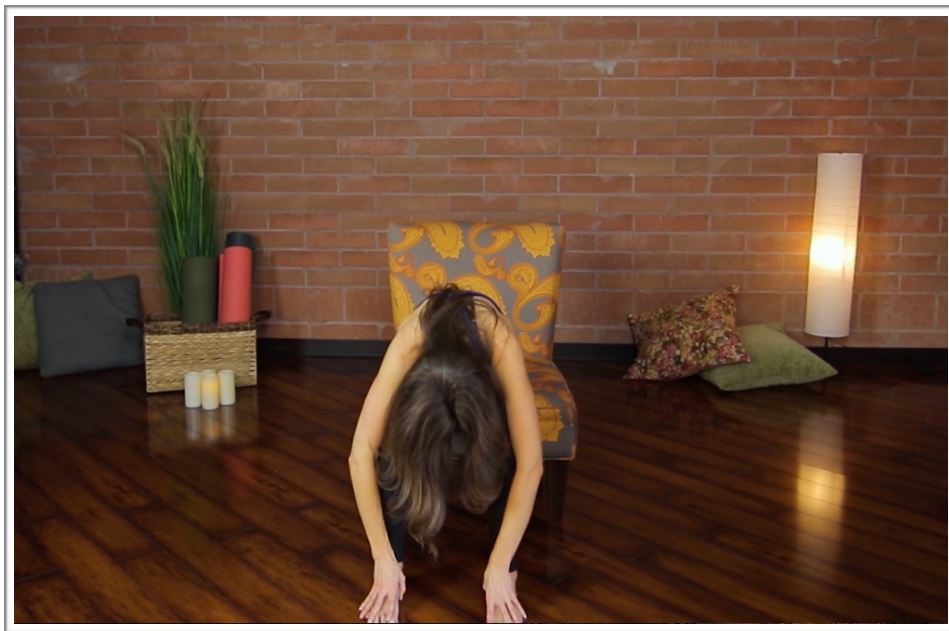
Make sure your shoulders don't creep up toward your ears.

Keep the chin slightly tucked so you don't look up or arch the back of the neck as you twist.

Back Release Stretch: Forward Fold

Level 1

Walk your feet a little farther in front of you and gently bend forward, allowing your chest to rest on your thighs. Tuck your chin and allow the back of your neck to release and relax as the crown of your head hangs toward the floor. Let your shoulders relax forward as well. Focus on taking deep breaths that stretch into the muscles of your back and feel them relax and release tension every time you exhale. Keep the breath deep and calm. Your breath is your biggest ally when it comes to releasing tight tense muscles.



Level 2

If you would like a deeper stretch, feel free to stand up and fold forward over your standing legs. Just be sure to keep a deep bend in the knees so you aren't straining your low back. In this position it can feel good to grab onto opposite elbows and let your arms hang. Make sure you are letting the head hang as well and not trying to look up or at the ground.

Tips:

Try closing your eyes and feel the body relax even more.

Breathe in and out through the nose - this has a natural calming effect on the body.

Imagine your inhales are like scrubbing bubbles, looking for tension in the body and scrubbing it clean every time you exhale.

Upper Back Exercise: Goal Post Arms

Level 1 - Upright Goal Post Arms

Sit up tall in your chair and bring your arms up to a goal post position. The elbows should be lifted, in line with your shoulders. There is a ninety degree bend in your elbows and your palms face forward. Keep your core engaged and exhale to squeeze the shoulder blades together on your back. Your palms and elbows will draw back, but try not to let your back arch forward too much. Release your elbows forward back to their original goalpost position and repeat this squeezing motion ten times.



* Elbows in line with shoulders.



* Shoulders squeeze together. Elbows draw slightly back.

Level 2 - Forward Bend Goal Post Arms

Keeping your arms in goalpost position, lean your chest forward and hover above your thighs. Tuck your chin so the back of your neck is long and not pinched. Squeeze the shoulder blades together and lift the back of the arms toward the ceiling. Release the arms forward to the original goalpost position and repeat this shoulder blade squeeze ten times.



Tips:

Keep your ears in line with your shoulders - don't let your chin jut forward.

Exhale to squeeze the shoulder blades together and inhale to release.

Try to move your elbows and palms in line with each other.

Neck and Shoulder Relief Exercise: The Chest Stretch

Level 1

Bring your hands behind you and clasp them together or grab onto the back of your chair. Draw your shoulders back and down. Lift your chest and arch it slightly forward - feeling a nice stretch in the chest and front of the shoulders. Take deep breaths and let your chest expand with your inhales.



Level 2

Find a doorway and bring your arms into a goalpost position with the elbows and hands resting on the door frame. Let the chest slowly lean forward until you feel a stretch in the front of your chest and shoulder muscles. Breathe deeply through your nose and try to hold this stretch for 30 seconds. Experiment with raising and lowering your elbows on the door frame and holding in each position to stretch your muscles at a different angle.

Tips:

Keep your chin slightly tucked so that you don't over arch the back of your neck.

Use your breath to stretch your chest muscles from the inside out.

Low Back Support: Glute Strength

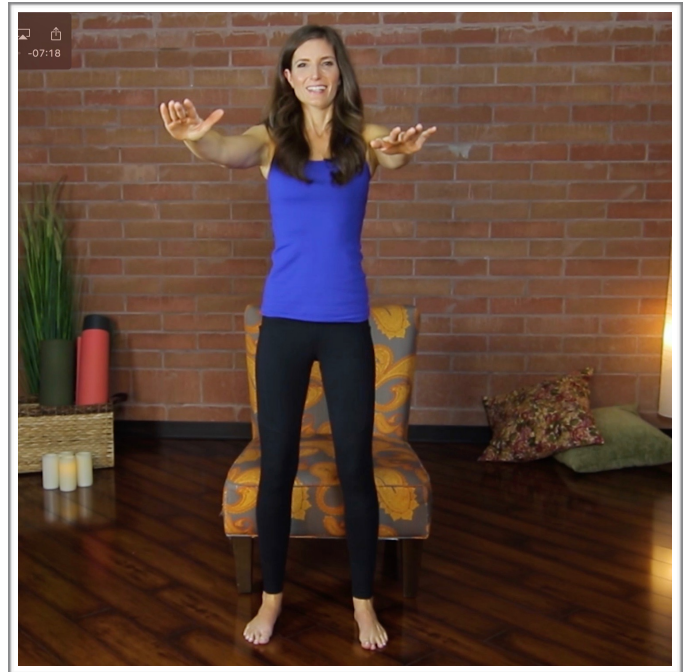
Level 1 - Glute Squeezes

Sit forward in your chair and place your feet slightly farther apart than your knees. Bring your hands down onto the chair next to your hips. Engage the core and sit up as tall as you can. As you exhale, squeeze your glutes (the buttock muscles) underneath you. Feel your hips rise slightly as you squeeze the glutes. Inhale and release the glutes. Exhale to squeeze and inhale to release. Repeat these squeezes 20 times.



Level 2 - Stand and Sit

Scoot your hips farther back in your chair but don't let your back rest on the back of the chair. Turn your toes just slightly apart and plant your feet a little wider than hips width apart. Reach your arms straight forward with your palms facing down and take a deep breath in. Exhale to press into your heels and stand all the way up. Squeeze your glutes and press your hips forward as you stand. Inhale to sit the hips back down but try to hover them right above your chair without touching. Exhale to stand up again. Repeat 10 times.



Tips

Make sure your knees don't collapse in toward each other - you want them pointing the same direction as your toes.

Keep your movements slow and controlled.

Hip/Glute Stretch: Seated Pigeon Stretch AKA The Wonder Stretch That Can Erase Sciatica

Sit up tall in your chair and roll your shoulders down onto your back. Place your feet hips width apart and make sure your knees are bent at a 90 degree angle. Cross your right ankle over your left thigh and flex your right foot in order to stabilize your right knee joint. Place your right hand on your right knee and very gently and slowly, press the knee slightly down toward the ground. You should feel a stretch in your right glute (buttock muscle). If you don't feel that stretch, try leaning your chest slowly forward until you feel the stretch in your right glute and right outer hip. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds while you breathe deeply through your nose. Repeat this stretch with the left leg.



Tips:

If you suffer from low back pain and sciatica, try to do this stretch three times a day. Use post-it notes to remind yourself to do it at your desk at work or at home at the kitchen table.

This stretch can also be performed on your back. Cross your right ankle over your left knee and draw your left knee into the chest.

Low Back Support: Hip Flexor Stretch

Scoot your hips all the way to the front edge of your chair and turn to the left. Hold on to the back of your chair with your left hand. Keep your left hip on the chair and allow your right knee to come down onto the floor. Step your left foot over toward the left so that you can lean your right hip forward. You should feel a stretch all along the front of your right hip and thigh. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds and breathe deeply through your nose. Repeat on the other side.



Tips:

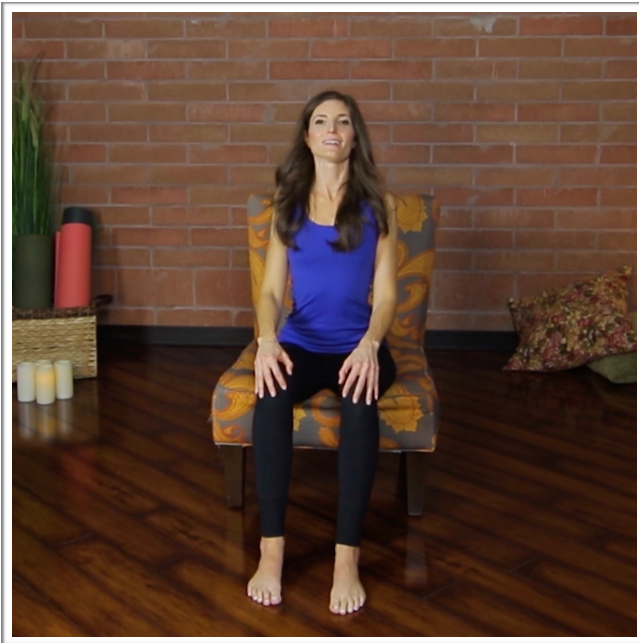
If you don't feel the stretch in the front of the hip of your back leg, try pressing that hip forward a little more.

If you spend a lot of time sitting, you might have tight hip flexors. Stretching them out will help create better pelvic and spinal alignment.

For more of a challenge, you can do this stretch standing up. Hold onto the back of your chair and balance on your left leg. Bend your right knee and grab onto the top of your right foot behind your hips. Gently draw your knee back while you press your hip forward. Try to take your hand off the chair and balance while you do this

Spinal Flexion and Extension: Seated Cat Cows

Sit forward in your chair and place your hands on your knees. Inhale and draw your shoulders together while you arch your chest forward and lift your chin slightly. Exhale and tuck your chin to your chest as you round your back toward the back of your chair. Inhale and arch forward, exhale and round back. Move slowly and mindfully. Listen to your back to let you know how far to bend. Repeat 10 times.



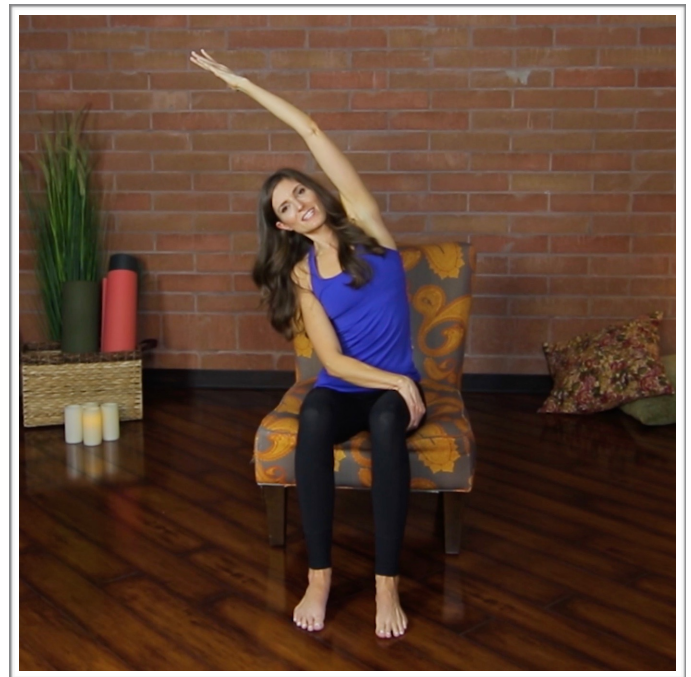
Tips:

As you inhale and lift the chest, try not to let the neck bend back too far. Think of lengthening the front of the throat rather than bending the back of the neck.

Keep your core gently engaged to help stabilize the lower back.

Lateral Stretch: Side Bends

Reach your right hand for the outside of your left thigh and stretch your left arm up toward the ceiling. Feel this arm lifting your entire ribcage up and feel your spine growing taller. Keep the length in the spine and exhale as you reach your left arm over and bend to the right. Press your left hip down into the chair and reach your left fingers farther. Take 3-5 deep breaths into the left side of your ribcage. Inhale to return to center and repeat on the other side.



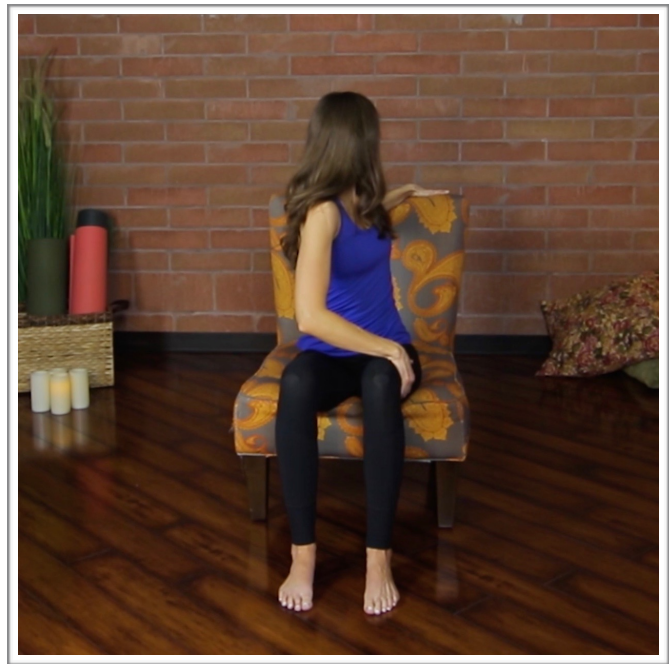
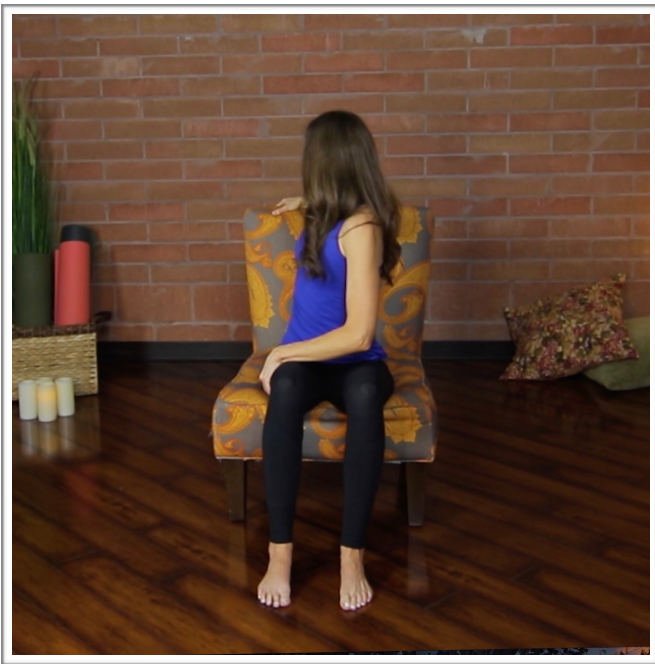
Tips:

The deeper you breathe, the more you will be able to stretch out the intercostal muscles of your ribcage.

Keep your shoulders squared forward and try not to let your chest hunch forward.

Spinal Rotation: Seated Twist

Reach your right hand to the outside of your left thigh. Bring your left hand behind you onto the back of your chair and turn your chin to look over your right shoulder. Inhale and sit up even taller, exhale and twist a little deeper. Use your hands to help gently guide your spine into this twist. Hold for 3-5 deep breaths. Turn back to center and give your spine a moment to “unwind” before repeating on the other side.



Tip:

Make sure your posture is tall and never let your spine round back.

Neck Stretches

Reach your left arm down by your side in a half “A” shape and draw your left shoulder down away from your ear. Allow your right ear to tilt down toward your right shoulder like you are holding a phone between your ear and your shoulder. Breathe deeply and feel your shoulders melting down away from your ears more and more with every exhale. Hold for 3-5 deep breaths.



Now turn your chin down as if you were looking down at your right jean pocket. Walk your left arm back by a few inches to feel the stretch more in the side of the neck and front of the chest. Hold for 3-5 deep breaths. Repeat on the other side.

Finally, release your arm down by your side and tuck your chin all the way forward to the chest. Breathe deeply to stretch out the back of your neck. Hold for 3-5 breaths.

Lift your head and enjoy the feeling your strong tall posture.

Tips:

Keep the chest lifted rather than letting your shoulders cave forward.

Don't push the neck too hard into these stretches. Allow gravity to gently draw your head over while your neck muscles relax.