# October 16 is World Spine Day: Move your spine!

MOVE YOUR SPINE
WORLD SPINE DAY 2023

Chiropractors' Association of Saskatchewan

October 16, 2023 is World Spine Day. This year, the theme is Move Your Spine. The Canadian Chiropractic Association is asking you to join us by being active! Regular physical activity and movement of the body and spine play a crucial role in supporting musculoskeletal (MSK) health for the average Canadian.

Remember, these exercises can be adapted to individual abilities and modified as needed. Children and teens should always be supervised by an adult when engaging in physical activities. Make sure that everyone involved is listening to their bodies and stops any stretches or movements that cause significant pain or discomfort. It's crucial to consult with an MSK expert, like a chiropractor, who can provide personalized guidance and ensure exercises are safe and suitable for your specific condition and abilities. They can offer modifications and additional exercises to support you in maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle.

## The Cat-Camel stretch (or modified cat-camel stretch) helps improve spinal flexibility, promotes joint mobility in the entire spine, and stretches the muscles of the back.

### Cat-Camel Stretch:

- Begin on all fours, with your hands aligned under your shoulders and knees aligned under your hips.
- Start by arching your back upward while breathing out through your mouth, tucking your chin toward your chest, and rounding your spine like a scared cat and pulling your belly button in towards your spine. Hold this position for a couple seconds.
- Slowly reverse the movement by lowering your belly towards the floor, lifting your chest and tailbone upward, and looking up towards the ceiling while breathing in through your nose.
- Repeat this fluid back-and-forth motion, alternating between the cat and camel positions for several repetitions.

### Modified Cat-Camel Stretch:

- Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the ground and your hands resting on your thighs.
- Slowly round your upper back, tucking your chin towards your chest as you breath out through your mouth and pull your belly button in towards your spine.
- Hold the rounded position for a couple seconds, feeling the stretch along your spine.
- Then, gently arch your back, lifting your chest and looking up while breathing in through your nose.
- Hold the arched position for a couple seconds, feeling the stretch in the opposite direction.
- Repeat this fluid back-and-forth motion, alternating between the cat and camel positions for several repetitions.

## The chest opener stretch helps counteract poor posture, relieve tension in the chest and shoulder muscles, and promote better upper body alignment.

### Chest Opener Stretch:

- Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart and your shoulders relaxed.
- Interlace your fingers behind your back, or if more comfortable, hold onto a towel or strap.
- Gently squeeze your shoulder blades together as you straighten and lift your arms away from your body.
- Keep your chest lifted, and if possible, slightly tilt your head back to deepen the stretch.
- Hold the stretch for a few seconds, feeling the opening in your chest and shoulders. For an advanced stretch, keep your knees straight and lean forward until you feel a slight stretch in your hamstrings.
- Release and repeat the stretch for several repetitions.
- Modification: Perform this movement on a yoga mat, with a yoga block vertically along your spine, between your shoulder blades. Reach arms out to the side to open the stretch.

## The "Superhero Stretch" encourages children and teens to engage their imagination while promoting flexibility and mobility throughout the body.

### The Superhero Stretch:

- Stand with your feet hip-width apart and arms by your sides. You can also modify this stretch by sitting with your feet planted flat on the ground and sitting up tall, be careful not to overextend your back!
- Take a deep breath in and raise your arms up overhead, stretching them towards the sky.
- As you exhale, bend forward at the waist, reaching your fingertips towards your toes.
- Hold the stretch for a few seconds, feeling the lengthening sensation in your back and legs.
- Inhale again and slowly roll your spine back up to a standing position, bringing your arms overhead.
- Repeat the stretch for several repetitions, imagining yourself as a strong and flexible superhero.

## The "Dancing Butterfly Stretch" not only stretches the muscles in the hips and inner thighs but also adds an element of playfulness and movement to keep children and teens engaged.

### The Dancing Butterfly Stretch:

- Sit on the floor with the soles of your feet touching, forming a "butterfly" shape with your legs.
- Hold onto your ankles or feet with your hands.
- Gently sink your knees down and slowly raise them up, resembling a calm butterfly resting its wings.
- As you sink your knees, feel the stretch in your inner thighs and hips.
- Continue the "flapping" motion for a minute or two, making it fun and rhythmic like dancing butterflies.

## The "Rainbow Rolls" and "Pot of Gold" stretches are great for bringing blood flow to neck and shoulders that get stiff from prolonged sitting, whether you're stuck doing homework or trying to meet those office deadlines!

### The Rainbow Roll Stretch:

- Sit comfortably on a chair with your feet touching the ground and your hands in your lap.
- Slowly tilt your head to bring your left ear to your left shoulder. Hold for 10-20 seconds.
- Slowly tilt your head in the opposite direction to bring your right ear to your right shoulder. Hold for 10-20 seconds.

For a deeper stretch, you can use your hand to guide your head as you relax your neck muscles.

### The Pot of Gold Stretch:

- Sit comfortably on a chair with your feet touching the ground and your hands in your lap.
- Tilt your chin to your chest.
- Slowly rotate your head to look 'under' your left underarm. Hold for 10-20 seconds.
- Slowly rotate your head to the other side, to look 'under' your right underarm. Hold for 10-20 seconds.
- Return your neck to its neutral position and take a deep breath.

For a deeper stretch, you can use your hand to guide your head as you relax your neck muscles.