

# BEND & STRETCH

PHYSICAL THERAPY AND PILATES

**STAY INJURY-FREE**

**5 MUST  
DO  
EXERCISES**



Kateryna Bakay, PT

## My Favorite 5 MUST DO Exercises



My clients frequently ask me: “If I had only 10min a day, what exercises should I do to keep my body healthy and injury-free?” This is a 1-million-dollar question as there is no such thing as “one approach fits all” when it comes to strengthening and mobility. However, having worked with thousands of bodies over the past 15 years, I know that over time, we all tend to develop similar patterns that lead to abnormal functional movements. The most common physical impairments that I see in my clients fall in one of the following categories:

1. **Forward head and rounded shoulders** – this posture may lead to neck pain, tension headaches, “knots” and tightness in upper traps, as well as shoulder impingement injuries. Keeping neutral alignment of our cervical spine in relationship to our torso reinforces shock-absorptive properties of our spine and keeps our discs healthy.
2. **Stiff thoracic spine** – lack of mobility in our midback through the ribcage is directly correlated with increased injury rate to our low back, neck, and even rotator cuff mechanism of the shoulder. Our thoracic spine is designed to help us rotate and twist in our daily life. If we are stiff and lack that vital function, we will compensate elsewhere!
3. **Insufficient hip joint mobility** – hip is a ball-and-socket joint, just like our shoulder, and was designed to move in all planes of motion. Lack of adequate movement in our hip joint may lead to back pain, sacroiliac joint pain, and knee pain as we lose ability to perform a deep squat or extend our hip while walking and running.
4. **Insufficient ankle dorsiflexion** – inability to bend at the ankle where the knee moves forward over the toes while our heel stays in contact with the ground is crucial for descending stairs, crouching, squatting, getting on and off the floor. Lack of ankle dorsiflexion may lead to foot pain, knee pain, and hip pain.
5. **Insufficient big toe extension** – Our foot is the first point of contact with the ground, wired to send proprioceptive information to our brain. Lack of mobility in our big toe affects our gait mechanics. Both running and walking require big toe push-off during the final stance phase of gait cycle. Lack of big toe extension may lead to plantar fasciitis, Achilles tendonitis, knee pain, and even back pain.

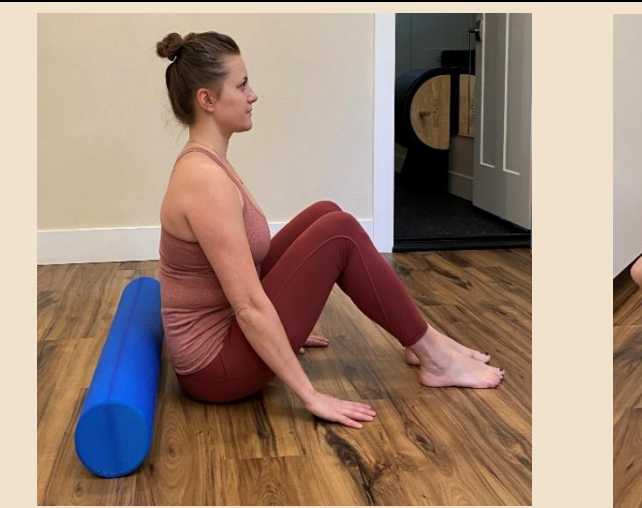

The following 5 exercises will address each of the above mentioned categories and reinforce mobility and strength to keep your body functioning at the highest level so that you do not develop compensatory movement patterns that lead to injury over time.

# BEND & STRETCH

## #1 Chin Tuck with “W” Hands



START	FINISH
	
<p>Start by sitting next to the wall with your back flat, knees bent, rolled towel placed against the top of your head.</p>	<p>Press the back of your head gently against the towel to create a “chin tuck” position. At the same time place your hands in a “W” position and press the back of your forearms gently against the wall. Hold this posture for 60sec.</p>

## #2 Thoracic Extension over Foam Roll



START	FINISH
	
<p>Grab a foam roll and sit on the floor. Place the foam roll against your midback and start slowly rolling back.</p>	<p>Lean back over the foam roll to extend your thoracic spine. Keep your elbows pointed towards each other, tailbone planted on the floor. Pull your lower ribs down towards your pelvis. Hold this position for 60sec.</p>

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## # 3 Half-kneeling Thoracic Rotation next to the Wall



START	FINISH
	
<p>Start in half-kneeling position 6in away from the wall. Ensure your pelvis is tucked under by using your glutes and abdominals so that you are not arching in your lower back.</p>	<p>Start tracing your arm up the wall as you rotate your upper torso trying to look as far as you can behind your shoulder. Make sure you are not leaning away from the wall. Repeat 10x ea. side.</p>

## #4 Toe Extension combined with Ankle Dorsiflexion

START	FINISH
 <p>Place your toes against the wall, heel flat on the floor, knee straight.</p>	 <p>Keeping your heel down on the floor, try to touch your knee on the wall. Stop if your heel starts to lift off the floor., Repeat 20x on each foot.</p>

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## #5 Deep Squat

START	FINISH
	
<p>Stand in front of the wall or a table for support. Find your most comfortable stance with feet wider than your shoulders and toes slightly turned out.</p>	<p>Squat as low as you can, trying to keep your heels down on the floor. Once you are in your deep squat, use the wall or table to help you balance and shift your body weight forward. The goal is to increase the range of motion in your ankles so that eventually you can maintain this deep squat without any support. Hold this position for 60sec.</p>

I hope you enjoyed practicing these mobility drills. If you find yourself struggling with some of the exercises, just slow down and be patient with your body. Change takes time. Muscles, bones, tendons, and ligaments need consistent loading for the permanent remodeling to take place. With consistent practice and perseverance, I promise you will FEEL the difference. Please refer to the link below for the video demonstration of these exercises: [Instagram Reel](#)

In good health,

Kateryna Bakay, Owner

[www.bendstretch.com](http://www.bendstretch.com)

