Stiff Shoulders stretches

Adapted from the Straub Clinic and Hospital physical therapy program

A stiff shoulder is a painful shoulder; in fact, **the shoulder thrives on motion**. Consistent stretching increases your range of motion and relieves pain and stiffness.

The most common source of shoulder pain is capsulitis, inflammation of the ligament that surrounds and connects the ball of the upper arm bone to the shoulder socket. We've had considerable relief by doing these exercises both on ourselves and our students. They're common exercises used by physical therapists and they really work!

General tips:

- Stretch in all directions, opening each of the four quadrants of the shoulder - the front and back, and upper and lower sections of the shoulder.
- Do this series up to five times per day, holding each stretch for five full breaths (about 30 seconds).
- You should feel your shoulder stretching as you do these and for some people it may be uncomfortable or even painful.
- Do these in any order, but don't skip any stretches. It's more effective to stretch all four quadrants of the shoulder than to focus on one quadrant.
- Even if you don't have shoulder pain, these stretches can keep your shoulders healthy and increase your range of motion.
- Once you finish the stretch, any lingering pain shouldn't last longer than five minutes. If it lingers longer than 15 minutes, you've stretched too deeply. Adjust the effort at the next session.
- **Consistency will pay off!**

#1) Forward elevation (wall down dog)

Anterior/inferior capsule (front/lower part of shoulder)

Press hand on wall (or tree!) at eye level before dropping the torso into a Down Dog stretch.

Allow the arms to externally rotate to create a broadening across the shoulders. You can achieve this by rolling your armpits towards one another.

#2) Abduction/extension
Anterior capsule (front of shoulder)

Place hand on surface at shoulder level with a slight bend in the arm.

Gently turn away from your hand.

#3) Abduction/flexion
Posterior capsule (back of shoulder)

Draw the arm across the upper torso, using the crook of your elbow to support the stretching arm. This gives you better leverage.

An alternative stretch is Garudasana (Eagle Pose) arms. Once wrapped, draw your shoulders and arms downward - yummy!

#4) Abduction/internal rotation

Posterior/inferior capsule (back/lower part of shoulder)

Move into this stretch with care, being careful not to force your arm to the floor. Experiment with this one standing against a wall, but make sure your upper arm extends straight out from the shoulder.

#5) Abduction/internal rotation

Posterior/superior capsule (back/upper part of shoulder)

A great stretch for Vinyasa yogins. Hold a strap (or stick) with the upper hand placed above your head.

Grab the strap with the lower hand and gently draw the lower hand up the back by extending the upper arm. Breathe!

#6) Shoulder flexion

Use one hand on the other arm's forearm to draw the arm straight overhead. The thumb will point towards the floor as your arm reaches towards the floor.

#7) External rotation

Lying on your back, use a stick to press the back of your hand towards the floor. Elbow is at a right angle and close to or against your body.

Keeping your shoulders healthy is a daily practice. Even doing these once a day will make a big difference in the long run.

You'll love the results and your yoga practice will benefit!

The Blissful Yoginis are Tania Jo Ingrahm and Rupali Embry, friends and yoga teaching partners for a billion years. Together they have taught private clients, public workshops and classes, corporate clients, retreats, intensives, yoga teacher trainings and owned a yoga studio. Their greatest joy is helping you deepen your yoga teacher skills and build a thriving, sustainable yoga business that you love. You can find them in Hawaii, on the internet (www.blissfulyogini.com) and wherever Spirit moves them.