

Introductory set of exercises– Initial Intensive Care (first 4-6wks)

Phase I



Exercise: 1 Spinal Rotation

Arms Swinging around the spinal axis. This is a warm up exercise, let your arms swing freely around your body, keep your shoulders relaxed and your wrists and hands loose and floppy. Breathe naturally and swing for at least one minute.



Exercise: 2 Above Arm Extension

This is a spinal stretch. Let your incoming breath carry your arms over your head. Keep your palms up and shoulders down. Feel the space between your vertebrae (pause) turn your arms down, exhale and lower your arms.

Do this 5 times.



Exercise: 3 Shoulder Release

Clasp your hands behind your hips and inhale, extend your arms behind you as you exhale. Look up to the ceiling as you breathe out.



Exercise: 4 Drawing in the abdominals

Lie on your flat on your back with your knees bent up at 90degree angle, your feet & knees hip width apart. Rest your arms by your sides, breathe in gently through your nose, taking the breath in laterally and filling the sides and back of your ribcage with air and then PAUSE. As you begin to EXHALE slowly via the mouth, gently engage the pelvic floor and as you exhale feel your lower abdominal area sink down towards the floor (flattening your back to the floor). As you continue to exhale allow your stomach to sink down a little further by drawing in your lower abdominal muscles. Gently INHALE through your nose into the sides and back of your ribcage (pause momentarily). Then Repeat the exhalation for 6 – 10 full breaths.

Exercise: 5 Spinal Articulation



To create a flexible spine you need to stretch and articulate it, you also need to strengthen it to improve your posture. As you curl up and down you will be aware that some sections of your spine feel flexible while others feel stiff and tight and hard to separate from each other. These tight areas are the areas you must work on – taking your time and breathing slowly to increase the opening of the area – imagine you are curving your spine to the shape of a letter C.

Exercise: 6 Pelvic Tilt



Lying on your back with your knees bent at 90 degrees keep your feet flat on the floor. Press your abdomen towards your spine as you breathe out. Curl your tail bone up slightly as your lower back flattens towards the floor (Pause) release your abdomen, breath fully, release your lower back and curve it away from the floor. Do this 5 times.

Exercise: 7 Cat Stretch



On all fours place your hands and knees on the floor and let your belly drop as you inhale, lift your head slightly. Breathe out and press your abdomen towards your spine, arch and release your back muscles, drop your head forward, chin into your throat (Pause) and repeat 3 times.

Tips for Phase 1 Exercises Mobilizing and Stretching.

1. Find the neutral spinal position
2. Find your pelvic floor
3. Practice breathing diaphragmatically
4. Practice drawing in your abdominals
5. Check for shoulder stabilization
6. Practice for good posture

Phase II Exercises – Building the Foundation.

Following the completion of phase I the reconstructive or correction phase begins

Lying on your back with your knees bent at 90 degrees, keep your feet flat on the floor, press your abdomen towards your spine as you breath out, curl your tail bone slightly as your lower back flattens towards the floor (Pause) release your abdomen, breath fully, release your lower back and curve it away from the floor – do this 5 times.

Exercise: 1 Pelvic Tilt



Body Benefits: Strengthens and lengthens the abdominal muscles, releases tension stored in the back and neck. Once the back and neck are freed up, posture immediately improves. Repetitions (10 x each side) alternating sides.

- 1:** Lying on your back with your knees bent at a 90 degree angle and feet together, place your hands on your hips and keep the back and neck long.
- 2.** Inhale rolling the knees to one side while pressing your opposite hand gently down on the hip to keep your hips and buttocks glued to the floor. You will not be able to go very far.
- 3.** Breath out – drawing in the abdominals to return the knees to the center imagine your thighs are made of lead so that you really have to use your abdominal muscles to swing your knees back to center each time.
- 4.** Inhale – to take the knees to the other side while pressing gently down on the hip with the opposite hand.
- 5.** Breath out drawing in the abdominals again to return the knees to the center.

Exercise: 2 Small Hip Roll



Exercise: 3 Hip Roll



Body Benefits: Strengthens the abdominal muscles, stretches the hip flexors and lower back. Releases tension stored in the upper spine, great for stiff shoulders, backs or necks – once upper body tension is reduced breathing improves. Repetitions (10 x each side) alternating sides.

- 1.** Lying on your back with your knees bent at a 90 degree angle and feet slightly wider apart than hip width. Your neck is long and your spine relaxed. Bend your arms and place both hands beneath your head. Elbows wide INHALE.
- 2.** Breath out – drawing in the abdominals as you roll your knees towards the floor, the soles of your feet will come off the mat as you stretch – let your head roll in the opposite direction to your knees so that you feel a stretch come right through your body. Breathe in and rest in this position.
- 3.** Exhale – Breath out drawing in the abdominals to roll your knees all the way over to the other side, let your head roll to the opposite direction. Imagine your lower abdominal muscles sinking down through your spine towards the floor. Breathe in and rest in this position, alternate smoothly from side to side.

Exercise: 4 Chest Lift



Body Benefits: Strengthens the abdominal muscles for a firmer/flatter stomach. Highlights (shoulder stabilization and neutral spine position) Repetitions (6 – 10)

- 1.** Lye on your back with your knees bent, feet and knees must be hip width apart. Bend your arms to fold your hands behind your head, fingers interlaced and elbows out to the side, check you are in the neutral spine position, INHALE.
- 2.** On EXHALATION draw in the abdominals to roll your head and shoulders off the mat, as you roll up slide your shoulder blades down into your back to keep the tops of your shoulders away from your ears. Keep your chin towards your chest and only a small space in between. Imagine you are lightly holding a peach under your chin, INHALE and remain perfectly still in this lifted position.
- 3.** On EXHALATION drawing in the abdominals to roll your head and shoulders back onto the mat. In the transition leave one arm behind your head and cross the other arm to your opposite hip bone for the 'oblique reaches', or take both arms by your sides and lift your knees to your chest, one leg at a time.

Exercise: 5 Oblique Reaches



Body Benefits: Strengthens the abdominals, internal and external oblique in particular. Trims the waist. (Repetitions: 6 – 10 each)

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet hip width apart. Bend one arm to fold one hand behind the head, the other hand rests on the opposite hip bone.
2. INHALE then Exhale – on breathing out drawing in the abdominals to cross your arm over your body stretching diagonally across the outside of your opposite knee, your palm faces down. Stay in Neutral position rotating your lower rib cage over to the side rather than just twisting the shoulders. To stay in neutral imagine there is an egg lying under your waist in the gentle curve of your back as you twist over be careful not to flatten your lower back and crush it. Shoulder blades stay down into your back throughout.
3. Breathing in and roll back to step 1 position keeping the stomach muscles engaged - repeat steps 2 – 3 for required repetitions.

Exercise: 6 Chest Opener



Body Benefits: Opens the chest and counteracts rounded shoulders. Releases neck and shoulder tension and stiffness in the upper and mid back. Strengthen and tones the chest and arms – repetitions 6-10.

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent at a 90degree angle, feet hip width apart, make sure you are in neutral spine, with your neck and shoulders relaxed. Lift both arms to the ceiling, shoulder width apart with your palms facing each other, keep your arms straight without locking your elbows, your hands should be level with your sternum.
2. Breathing in as you slowly open your arms to the sides without bending them, slide your shoulder blades down into your back as the arms open. Imagine you are painting the arc of a rainbow beginning at the center working your way outwards at each end.
3. Breathe out drawing in the abdominals to return your arms to the starting position. Using your chest muscles to perform the movement.

Exercise: 7 Arm Splits.



Body Benefits: Strengthen and tones the back chest and arm muscles, releases tension in the neck, shoulders and upper back. Stretches the chest muscles to counteract round shoulders. Repetitions 6-10 each way.

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent at 90degree angle with your feet hip width apart. Reach your arms up towards the ceiling (your arms are straight without locking your elbows with your palms facing away from you)
2. Breath out, drawing in the abdominals and split one arm in each direction so that your upper arm moves towards ear level while you take your lower arm to hip level. Make sure your shoulder blades slide down into your back as you move keeping the tops of your shoulders away from your ears. Imagine your arms opening and closing like scissors.
3. Breathe in to return your arms to the starting position.
4. Breath out – drawing in the abdominals and split the arms in the opposite direction.
5. Inhale – to return your arms to the ceiling.

Exercise: 8 Double leg lift.



Body Benefits: Strengthens and tones the abdominal muscles trims the waist and firms the inner thighs. Repetitions 6-10 each side.

1. Lie on your side with one hip carefully stacked on top of the other. Your ear, the middle of your shoulder, your hip and ankle should all be in a straight line. Your feet are pointing down. Your upper arm rests on the floor; your lower arm stretches out above your head. Palm up – your head resting on your arm. Take your legs slightly further forward and breathe in.
2. Breath out – drawing in the abdominals to stabilize your body and lift both straight legs off the mat, about 10cm squeezing your inner thighs together as you lift and stretching your legs away from you. Imagine your inner thighs have been stuck together with glue so they move as a single unit. Hold for the count of 3.
3. Inhale – as you slowly bring both legs down.

Exercise: 9 Outer thigh lift



Body Benefits: Tones the outer thigh muscles to reduce saddle bags and create slimmer thighs. Strengthens the back stretches leg muscles all the way from the bottom all the way down to the ankles. Repetitions 6 – 10 each side.

1. Lie on your side with one hip carefully stacked on top of the other, your ear, middle of your shoulder, your hip and ankle should all be in a straight line, feet pointing down, upper arm rests on the floor in front of you, the lower arm stretches out above your head, palm up your head resting on your arm. Bend your lower leg forwards to give a little more support, reach your upper leg away from you without moving your hips and flex your foot. Turn the thigh of the upper leg inward in the hip socket so that the leg is slightly internally rotated without actually moving the hip itself. NOW Breathe In!
2. Breathing out – drawing in the abdominals to keep your body stable stretch the upper leg away from you. As you lift it level with your hip. Lengthen your waist and really reach your upper leg away from you keeping the internal rotation pushing through the heel of your foot as you lift. Imagine you are trying to touch the wall opposite you with your heel.
3. Breathe in and lower your leg to the starting position.

Exercise: 10 Inner thigh lift



Body Benefits: Strengthens and firms the inner thigh muscles. Repetitions 6-10 each side.

1. Lie on your side with one hip carefully stacked on top of the other, your ear, middle of your shoulder, your hip and ankle should all be in a straight line, feet pointing down, upper arm rests on the floor in front of you, the lower arm stretches out above your head, palm up your head resting on your arm, bring your top leg in front of you so that the foot of your upper leg rests on the floor keeping the leg straight and one hip stacked on top of the other, your lower leg remains straight underneath it. Breathe In!!
2. Breathe Out – drawing in the abdominals and stretch your lower leg away from you as you slowly lift your heel about 15cm off the mat. Make sure you keep your lower knee facing forwards throughout this. Make sure your hips don't move. Imagine you are trying to touch the wall opposite you with your heel.
3. Breathe In – as you lower your leg to the mat.

DOMAIN

MIND BODY

Exercise: 11 Hamstring Lift



Body Benefits: Lifts and Tones the hamstring muscles. Strengthens the hamstring muscles in the back of the thighs. Stretches the leg for a more streamlined appearance. Repetitions 6 – 10 on each leg.

1. Lie on your front with your legs stretched away from you feet together. Bend your elbows and place your hands one on top of the other under your forehead. Press your pubic bone gently towards the mat to lengthen your lower back. Breathe In.
2. Breath out – Drawing in the abdominals and lift one leg off the mat stretching the leg along its length from where it meets the buttock all the way down to the heel. Hold for the count of 6. Imagine your leg is like a piece of sticky toffee growing thinner and thinner as you stretch it in opposite directions.
3. Inhale – and lower your leg.

Exercise: 12 The Arrow



Body Benefits: Back and abdominal muscles are strengthened in time this will help the lower back aches and pains. Helps to improve shoulder stabilization. Repetitions 6 – 12

1. Lie face down on the mat with your arms by your sides. Palms up and fingers pointing towards your feet. Press your pubic bone gently into the mat to keep your lower back long. Breathe In.
2. Breath out – Drawing in the Abdominals as you lift your palms towards the ceiling sliding your shoulder blades down your back towards your hips and lifting your sternum and head and shoulders off the mat. Hold this position for the count of 3 and imagine your body as a streamlined arrow – press the crown of your head away from you to keep the back of your neck lengthened and to stretch your spine at the same time reach your fingertips in the opposite direction.
3. Breathe in and lower your body down.

Stretch 1 – Arrow- Rest



COOL DOWN Completion of Set of Exercises

Body Benefits: A great opportunity to cool down and unwind after an exercise session and to stretch your lower back.

1. From the **ARROW** position draw your body back so that you are sitting back on your heels with your arms stretched out in front of you. Rest there for 30 seconds.

Stretch: 2 – Hamstring



Body Benefits: Lengthens the hamstring muscles in the back of the thighs – helps to release a tight lower back.

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet - Hip width apart, Raise one leg and place your hands behind your thigh to support it. Breathe in – making sure your tail bone is down on the mat. Breathe out drawing in the abdominals as you stretch a raised leg up towards the ceiling using your hands to support your leg as it extends. Flex the foot – hold this for 30seconds repeat on the other. If this position is uncomfortable for you use a belt or dressing gown to support your foot. If you have fairly flexible hamstrings you can stretch the leg which isn't supported by your hands away from you along the mat so that the leg lies straight rather than bent.

Quadriceps Stretch



Body Benefits: Lengthens the quadriceps muscles in the front of the thighs.

1. Lie on your side in a straight line with your lower arm above your head, palm up with your head resting on your arm. Bend your lower leg forwards to support you – the higher up you can place this bent leg the better the muscles will stretch. Breathe In.
2. Breathe Out – drawing in the abdominals and reach down to take hold of the ankle of your upper leg and draw it behind you towards your buttocks. You will feel your Quadriceps muscle in the front of your thigh stretching. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds – keeping your abdominal muscles engaged – roll over onto your opposite side and repeat this stretch.

Buttock Gluteus Stretch



Body Benefits: Stretches the gluteal muscles of the buttock – helps to release a tight lower back.

1. Lie on your back with one knee bent at a 90 degree angle, cross your other leg over and place the ankle just above the knee. Hold this ankle while keeping your head on the floor – Breathe In.
2. Breathe out - drawing in the abdominals as you pull your top ankle up towards you a little, you will feel a stretch in the buttock of the leg being held at the ankle. Hold this position for 30 seconds and Repeat with alternative leg on the other side.

If this feels relatively easy and you would like to increase the stretch, hold both hands behind the thigh of the bent leg at right angles and bring your knee a little further towards your chest. Still keeping the tailbone down hold for thirty seconds each side.