Relaxation Techniques

20-Minute Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise

Spend 20 to 30 minutes to practice at least once a day. As you become more experienced, you'll get significant relaxation benefits in 10 to 15 minutes. Your goal is to develop the ability to relax one muscle group at anytime.

Lie down or sit in a chair that comfortably supports your arms and head. For each muscle group, go through these steps:
1. Tense your muscles and hold (tightly, but not so much that it hurts) for 5 to 10 seconds. Notice the tension as you hold. Remember that feeling of tension.
2. Release your muscles, and relax. Notice how your muscles feel as you let go. You may feel sensations of warmth, heaviness, lightness, or tingling. These are sensations of relaxation.
3. Give yourself 10 to 20 seconds to relax and feel the sensations of your muscles relaxing. Enjoy the sensations. Remember them. Repeat twice, then go on to next muscle group.

Relaxation Exercises:
**Remember to relax between all repetitions**
- Hands and Lower Arms **Tense by making a fist with your hand** Repeat twice on each side.
- Biceps (front of upper arm) **Tense by bending arm at the elbow, but keeping wrist and hand as loose as possible** Repeat twice on each side.
- Triceps (front of upper arm) **Tense by straightening arm, but keeping hand loose** Repeat twice on each side.
- Forehead **Tense by wrinkling it as you would if you were worried or angry** Repeat.
- Eyebrows **Tense by frowning and creasing eyebrows** Repeat.
- Eyelids **Tense by squeezing them tightly together (remove contact lenses before beginning exercise)** Repeat.
- Nose **Tense by tightly pressing them together or squeeze them as though sucking on a lemon** Repeat.
- Lips **Tense by tightly pressing them together or squeeze them as though sucking on a lemon** Repeat.
- Eyes:
  - **Roll eyes up (hold and release)**
  - **Roll them down (hold and release)**
  - **Repeat**
- Jaws **Tighten the jaw muscles as if you were going to clench your teeth, but don’t actually allow your teeth to touch.** Hold this position for several seconds (no more than five seconds) and then release, closing your lips without touching your teeth. If you experience any pain, stop immediately and consult your dentist. **Repeat once or twice. You can still relax this area even if you have to skip this particular exercise by letting your jaw hang loosely while relaxing other areas.
- Chin **Tense by tucking chin down into chest. Then tighten all your muscles under the chin and in the front of your neck** Repeat.
- Tongue **Tense your tongue by pushing up against the back of your upper front teeth** Repeat. **Let your tongue just float in your mouth. Enjoy the sensations there.** Repeat.
- Neck **Tense by tilting head back and tightening muscles in the back of the neck. *Tilt head to right as though touching right shoulder.** Repeat on your left side.
- Shoulders **Tense by shrugging them upward as though touching your ears** Repeat.
• Upper back **Tense by pulling shoulder blades back.** *Then tighten upper back muscles as though as shoulder blades were going to touch** **Repeat.**
• Lower back **Tense by arching back** **Repeat.**
• Chest **Tense by pulling shoulders together in front** **Repeat.**
• Stomach **Tense by pulling in your stomach muscles** **Repeat.**
• Upper legs **Tense by straightening legs and locking knees.** *Or to tense both legs at the same time, pull upper legs together by touching knees tightly together as though to hold a coin between your knees** **Repeat.**
• Lower legs **Tense both legs by pulling toes back and up as though touching your shins** **Repeat.**
• Feet **Tense by curling toes and arching feet downward (stop if they begin to cramp)** **Repeat.**

Continue to breathe evenly and deeply. With your mind scan all your muscle groups again. Each time you exhale, notice how the muscle group you’re focusing on, grows warmer, and is more relaxed.

Take a deep breath in through nose. Hold it to a count of four. Exhale slowly to a count of four. Do this several times. Breathe deeply and evenly, and enjoy the sensations of warm, full relaxation.

To end this exercise, move your hands and arms around. Move your feet and legs around. Turn your head from side to side. Open your eyes, sit up, and let yourself feel awake and calm.

**Why is Relaxation Important?**

Relaxation is important for you because of the numerous health benefits it provides. While lowering your blood pressure, which eases the pressure on your heart, it also helps you make better decisions. By allowing yourself a few moments of relaxation per week, you gain a calm, clear, and energetic version of you. In the long term relaxation has many benefits as well, which include reducing the risk of a stroke, a slimmer figure, and for women, it even reduces the risk of breast cancer!