

Therapeutics for Sciatica & Piriformis Syndrome

Exercises

January 23rd, 2020

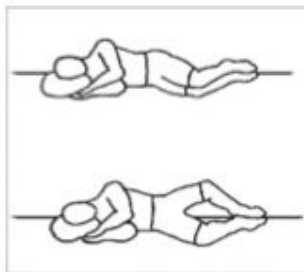
Stretches

BLOCK LUNGES



- Positioned on your hands and knees, step the right foot forward in between your hands. Use two blocks under your hands by your front foot.
- Place a third block underneath the quadriceps muscle of the back leg just above the knee, at the base of the thigh.
- Tuck the back toes and let the weight of the body fall onto the block. Do your best to keep the heel of the back foot pointing straight up toward the ceiling.
- The front leg and hip should not be under any strain. Feel free to make adjustments, turning the foot out or stepping the foot wider.
- You need to stay for 90 seconds to get the full benefits of this pose. But not longer.

CLAM SHELLS



- Start by lying on your left side, with your knees bent and the right leg on top of the left with the feet together.
- Maintain a neutral spine, engaging your abdominals if you need to.
- Stack the hips and don't let the top hip move backwards. You can even cheat the top hip forward. It is important to differentiate between the leg and the pelvis and not let them move in the same direction.
- From this position, raise your knee slowly engaging gluteus medius. Keep the pelvis and trunk stable. Hold the top position for 5 seconds.
- Lower slowly for five seconds.
- Another option is to raise the top knee slowly, hold for five seconds and then lower slowly only about half way maintaining an active muscle.
- You want to activate gluteus medius and any way that happens for you is the best way.

STANDING IT BAND STRETCH



- Cross your right ankle of the left ankle while standing. Try to line up the pinky toes as close as possible.
- Bend forward and pay attention to keeping the hyperextension out of the left knee.
- Reach your hands towards the floor or towards a block or blocks.
- Pull the right hip back if possible to go deeper.
- Repeat on the other side.

STANDING PIGEON



Stand with the feet hip distance apart and parallel.

- Cross the right ankle over the left knee. Flex the right foot strongly (push through the heel).
- Begin to squat. Think about lowering down backwards more than leaning forward. Stick the butt out.
- If you can bring the forearms onto the right shin, place them there and hold.
- Ideally the right shin is parallel to both the front of your mat and the floor.
- Breath.
- Change sides.

SQUATTING



- Stand up straight with feet shoulder's-width apart or slightly wider.
- It is okay to turn the feet out keeping the knees in line with the ankle. Make sure that the feet are turned out equally and not too much. Feel free to hold onto a chair as you begin to explore this exercise
- Slowly and steadily bend your knees and flex your hips to lower your butt toward the floor. Don't let your knees move forward of the toes. You are trying to squat down backwards.
- Don't worry about how far down you can go at first. Work on maintained alignment and a pain free descent.
- Lower down to the best of your ability and hold for five breaths. Try to increase this over time to 25 breaths.
- An advanced variation is to isolate and engage your pelvic floor muscles while squatting. In this version you try to tone the levator ani (a thick muscle at the top of the pelvic floor).

GOMUKHASANA



- You might want to sit up on a block or a few pillows or folded blankets (or towels) to begin this stretch.
- Come onto your hands and knees. Put your right knee in front of your left, both feet sticking out to the sides of you.
- Sit back between your feet onto your support.
- Try to keep the right knee on top of the left. For many of us it will lift and move to the right a bit. That's fine.
- Bow forward. If this seems relatively doable, lower the support. If that is also easy, sit your butt on the floor.
- Breathe.
- Change sides.

FIGURE FOUR ON THE BACK



- Lay on your back with the knees bent and your feet flat to the floor.
- Cross the right ankle over the left knee. Flex your right foot. Pick the left foot off of the floor drawing the knee towards you.
- Arch the lower back up off the floor gently and feel the stretch.
- Flatten the lower back to the floor and feel the difference. One is not better or worse than the other but I think that it is a deeper and more interesting stretch with the lower back slightly curved off the floor.
- Interlace your fingers behind the left thigh.
- Work to open the right hip by moving the right knee away as the left knee moves closer.
- Don't push the leg open with your hand.

TWIST ON BACK



- Lay flat on your back.
- Draw the right knee into the chest and keep the left leg extending long on the floor. The left toes point straight up towards the ceiling.
- Begin to twist drawing the right knee across the left side of the body. The right knee can go over as much as possible, even reaching the floor if that work (or you could put a block or blanket or pillow under it).
- Let the left hand rest on the right thigh. Reach your right arm out to the right.
- Keep tone in the belly and look over the right shoulder. Slow down the breath and let the stretch happen.
- Change sides.

PIGEON



- Starting on your hands and knees, slide your right knee towards your right wrist. Make sure that your right foot moves forward enough to get to the outside of the left thigh. If you fall onto the outside of your right hip, you may need to support that hip with a pillow or folded blanket.
- Slide the left leg straight back and make sure that the ankle is lined up with the knee and hip and that the foot is pointed straight.
- Walk the hands back alongside the hips and then try to and bring your hips towards square. (You will see that when the right leg is in front, the right hip pulls forward. Try to pull the right hip back and bring the left hip forward. You will probably feel more in your right hip as you do this.)
- Bow forward keeping the arms active and find the stretch deep in the right buttock. Take many breaths here.
- Change sides.

PIRIFORMIS STRETCH ON A CHAIR



- Sit upright in a chair with a flat back.
- Cross the right ankle over the left knee. Flex the right foot (push through the heel).
- Begin to lean forward keeping the natural arches in the back (meaning don't round forward and collapse your chest).
- If the lower back begins to round backwards, stop. You have gone too far. Go back to a point where you can keep the curve in the lower back and breathe here.

Releases

NERVE FLOSSING



- Sit in a chair with the feet flat on the floor.
- Tuck the chin into the chest and flex the leg under the chair.
- Look up towards the ceiling and straighten the leg while flexing the foot
- Lower the leg and repeat.
- Do this fifteen to twenty times.

CONSTRUCTIVE REST POSITION (CRP)



- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your heels situated 12 to 16 inches away from your pelvis, in line with your sit bones.
- Tie a belt around the middle of the thighs. You want to be able to let go here and not have to think too much about the position of your legs.
- Then do nothing. Discomfort arises from conditioned muscular patterns. Try not to shift or move when unpleasant sensations arise.
- You are hoping to feel sensations that you can sit with, and if possible, allow them to pass.
- Try to do this for 30 minutes a day. If you have time, longer sessions are advisable, or do it twice a day.

Remember, you are not here to suffer. If sensations come up and you feel that you have to move, feel free to move, then come back to where you were and try again. It's possible that you'll do this exercise and not feel anything; it will still be good for you.

SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA



- Lay a blanket or rolled up mat lengthwise on your mat. I prefer a Mexican blanket tri-folded so that it is flat.
- Sit with your pelvis on the floor right up against the blanket or mat.
- Lay down with the spine centered on the mat or blanket.
- Your ears should be in line with your shoulders so that your head is not dropping back too far.
- Bring the soles of the feet together as close to the hips as possible. Open to knees sideways.
- You can belt the legs together with a belt around your waist, across the inner thigh and under the feet.
- Support the outer leg with blocks or blankets under the thighs if you like but don't inhibit the opening action.

LEGS TOGETHER



- Lay flat on your back with the legs extended straight out.
- Flex your feet and keep your legs close together, big toes touching if possible.
- Activate your legs and try to keep the activation going for up to 5 minutes which is easier said than done.
- Press through the inner foot and draw the back through the outer foot (imagine the outer foot moving towards the shoulders).
- Keep the inner thighs active and moving in and down.
- This can get intense in different places such as the hip flexors, lower back etc.
- Be nice to yourself as you proceed.

LEGS APART



- This is a counter to the last exercise. Do it for an equal length of time.
- Let the feet open out to the side.
- Bring the feet back together.
- Do that over and over again.

FROG BELLY



- Lay on your stomach. Bend your knees wide out to the side, bringing the soles of the feet together in mid-air.
- The hip bones of the pelvis should be on the floor determining the height of the feet.
- They might be high off the floor. That indicates tight hips. If the feet flop to the floor you might be too loose.
- Draw the knees as high and wide as possible.
- You might feel this in a number of places but often it is the in top of the quadriceps at where the leg meets the pelvis.

ANKLE OVER KNEE AT WALL



Lay flat on your back with your knees bent and your toes at the base of a wall.

- Cross the right ankle over the left knee. Flex the right foot.
- Keep your lower back naturally arched a tiny bit off of the floor.
- Draw the left knee towards your chest and place your left foot on the wall
- Try your best to keep your right shin parallel to the chest while still reaching your tailbone down to the floor and your shoulders relaxed down on the floor.
- Stay for as long as ten minutes.
- Change sides.

ANKLE TO KNEE FORWARD BEND



- Sit with the legs straight out in front of you. Cross the right ankle over the left knee. Establish a flat back. Bow Forward. If you feel this in your piriformis (side of the butt) this is as far as you'll go. Take deep breaths and then change sides. If you feel this in your hamstring (back of the leg) you will move onto the second stage.
- Keep your right ankle on top of your left knee and bend the left knee placing the left ankle below the right knee.
- Stack your shins on top of one another, right shin on top. The left shin should be hiding underneath the right shin.
- Stay even on both sit bones.
- Flex the feet strongly.
- If you look down between your legs there should be a triangle of open space, the leg should be right on top of one another.
- Extend forward stretching deep into the piriformis. Breath.
- Do the other side.

ANKLE TO KNEE BACKWARDS



- Not everyone can get into this position. You can also do it with one leg straight and the bent leg ankle crosses over the straight leg knee.
- In a seated position, bend your knees and try to stack your right shin on top of the left. Your right foot should be on your left knee and your right knee should hover or lay flat above your left foot. When you look down between your legs, you should see an even triangle of space between your pelvis and your shins.
- You can loosely belt the legs in a way that doesn't pull them closer to each other but also won't let them separate any further.
- Begin to lean backwards slowly keeping an arch in your lower back. You have to keep the natural arch of the back even if you can only go a few inches. You can go down as far as your forearms, trying to relax and allow the right inner and outer thigh to release passively with each breath.