

Best 

Stretching Guide





Index:

1. The Ankle-to-knee Stretch/Reclined Pigeon
2. Standing Calf Stretch
3. Cobra Pose
4. Downward Dog
5. Forward Fold
6. Pigeon Pose
7. Runner's Lunge

The Ankle-to-knee Stretch/Reclined Pigeon



The ankle-to-knee stretch/Reclined Pigeon

1) Come to lie down on the floor with your back resting on a mat, knees bent - with the soles of your feet on the floor.

2) Bring your right knee towards your chest. Flex through your foot and cross your right ankle over your left knee.

3) You could stay here, or if you would like to get a bit deeper into the stretch, lift your left foot off of the ground and thread both your hands through your legs, to grab hold of the back of your left thigh.

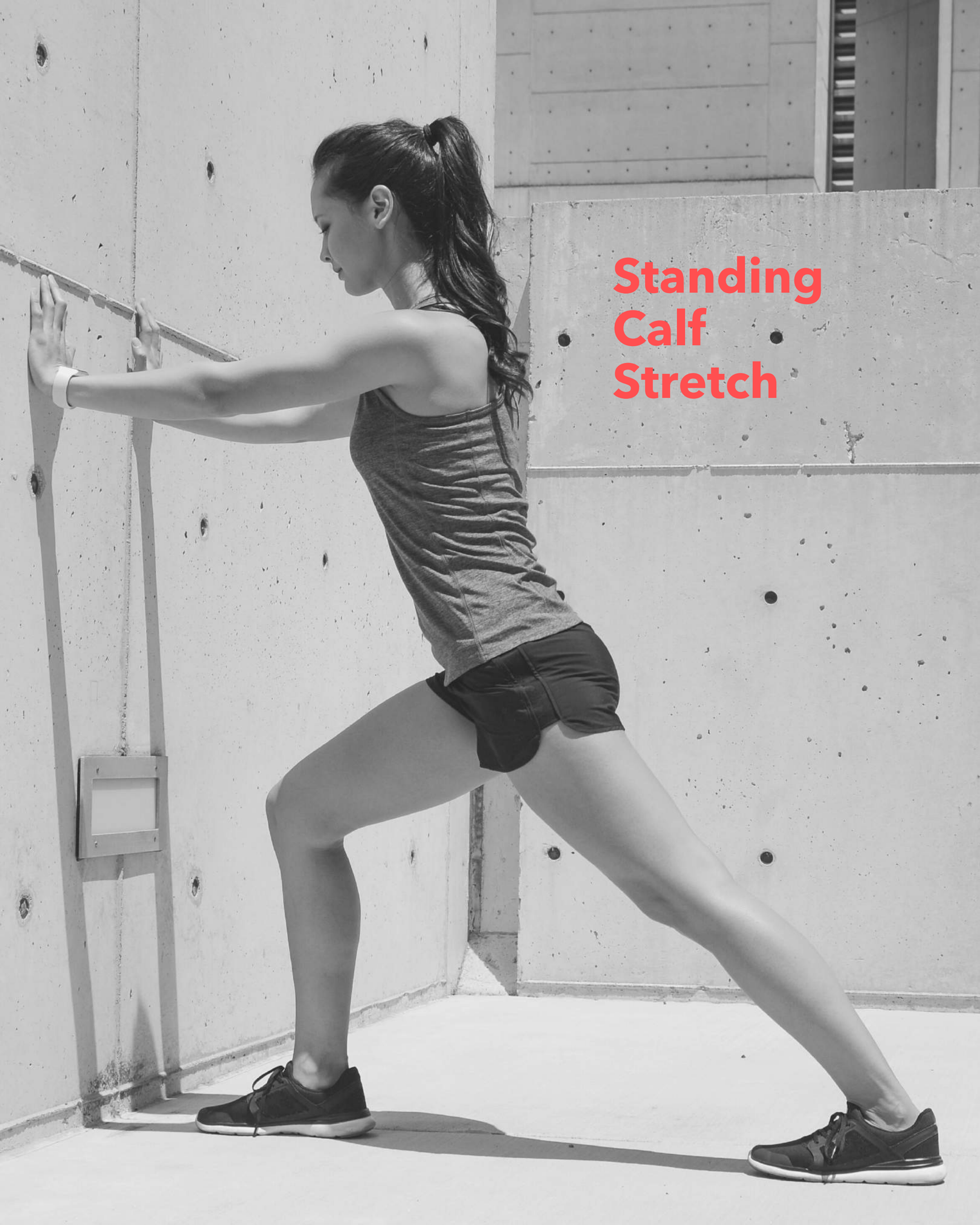
4) Ensure that your ankle is on your knee, not just the edge of your foot. Keep your right foot flexed generously.

5) Relax your shoulders, unclench your jaw, and breathe deeply.

6) Slowly lower the left foot to the floor and uncross your legs to move out of this posture. Balance it out on the other side.

This will stretch your outer hip, piriformis, gluteal, front hip flexors and lower back musculature.

**Standing
Calf
Stretch**



Standing Calf Stretch

- 1) Stand at arm's length from a wall or a sturdy piece of exercise equipment. Put your palms flat against the wall or hold on to the piece of equipment.
- 2) Hold one of your legs straight and keep your heel flat on the floor.
- 3) Slowly bend your elbows and front knee, and move your hips forward until you feel a stretch in your calf.
- 4) Hold this position for 30 to 60 seconds.
- 5) Switch legs and repeat.

Your Achilles tendon connects the muscles in the back of your leg to your heel bone. This calf stretch can help prevent an Achilles tendon rupture and help stretch out the lower calf muscles after running and jumping exercises.

Cobra Pose



Cobra Pose

1) Lie down on your mat and place your palms flat on the ground directly under your shoulders. Bend your elbows straight back and hug them into your sides.

2) Pause for a moment, looking straight down your mat with your neck in a neutral position. Anchor your pubic bone to the floor.

3) Inhale to lift your chest off the floor. Roll your shoulders back and keep your lower ribs on your mat. Make sure your elbows continue hugging your sides.

4) Keep your neck neutral by keeping your gaze on your mat.

5) Exhale to release.

The Cobra Pose increases the mobility of the spine, strengthens spinal support muscles, and can help relieve back pain by opening the chest and the front of the body.

Downward Dog



Downward Dog

Performing Downward Dog on the floor can be tricky. As a beginner, start by standing and master the move before performing Downward Dog on the floor.

- 1) Find a wall and stand about 3 feet away from it (far enough that you can fully extend your arms in front of you).
- 2) Place your hands on the wall, at shoulder height, with your fingertips pointing upwards.
- 3) Lean your body toward the wall at an angle while keeping your arms straight.
- 4) Keeping your hands where they are, move your hips back while you begin to lower your head and torso toward the floor. Continue to move down as far as you can and hold that position while pulling in your stomach and breathing slowly.
- 5) Continue to perform this exercise until you feel confident enough to take it to the ground.

If you're confident in your flexibility, follow these steps:

- 1) Begin in a Plank position with your body in a straight line. Keep your arms straight with your palms pressing down on the mat.
- 2) With your knees slightly bent, tuck in your belly and think about pulling your chest toward your thighs while lifting your bottom.
- 3) Once you are fully extended, straighten your legs gently.
- 4) Keep your head between your upper arms and relax your shoulders. Stretch your legs out long so that your heels touch the ground. If this isn't possible, focus on lengthening your spine rather than forcing your feet to be flat on the ground.
- 5) Continue to keep your whole body engaged and focus on breathing deeply.

This position stretches the back, ankles, calves and hamstrings. Downward dog is also helpful for relieving back pain and performing it often can help relieve stiffness and tension.

Forward Fold



Forward Fold

- 1) Stand with your feet hip-width apart, knees slightly bent, and arms by your sides.
- 2) Exhale as you fold forward from your hips and bring your head towards the floor. Tuck your chin, relax your shoulders, and think about extending the crown of your head toward the floor to create a long spine.
- 3) Keep your knees straight but with a gentle bend so that they are not locked in place. This will help protect your back.
- 4) Touch the floor with your fingertips. You can also wrap your arms around your legs if that feels more comfortable for you.
- 5) Hold for 30 - 60 seconds and don't forget to breathe.
- 6) Bend your knees and roll up slowly, starting with the low back and stacking one vertebra at a time, to return to a standing position.
If you can't reach the floor or your hamstrings are extremely tight, bend your knees more or try placing your hands on an elevated surface

This pose stretches your hamstrings, hips, calves, neck and back. A standing Forward Fold also improves flexibility on the posterior [back] side of the body, while also stimulating the liver and kidneys, and enhancing digestion.

Pigeon Pose



Pigeon Pose

There are a few different ways to approach the Pigeon pose. One of the simplest is from the Downward Facing Dog position however, you can follow the same directions starting from a position on your hands and knees if you prefer.

- 1) From Downward Facing Dog, lift your right leg.
- 2) Bend your right knee and bring it forward as if you were going to step into a lunge. Instead of placing your foot down as you would for a lunge, bring your right knee to the floor on the outside of your right hand. Your right shin may angle back towards your left hip or be more parallel to the front of your mat, depending on your range of motion.
- 3) Release your left knee to your mat. Your left leg should be flat on the floor. Take a look backward and make sure that your left foot is pointing straight back.
- 4) Square your hips towards the front of your mat.
- 5) Place padding (a folded blanket works well) under the right side of your hip, if this pose is uncomfortable to alleviate this.
- 6) If you feel stable, bring your torso down into a forward bend over your right leg.

7) Keep your hips square and weight balanced equally on both sides as best as you can. If this feels too intense, place a blanket or block under your hip or back knee. Reach your forehead toward the floor.

8) Continue squaring your hips and breathing into any tightness.

9) To come back up, bring your hands in line with your hips, curl your left toes and step back into a Downward Facing Dog position.

11) Repeat the pose on the other side.

The Pigeon pose specifically works as a hip opener and forward bend, stretching your thighs, groin, back, piriformis, and psoas. The leg extended to the rear gets a stretch of the psoas and other hip flexors. On the other side, the rotators and outer hip are stretched. It is a good antidote to sitting for long periods while also supporting digestion.

The Runner's Lunge



The Runner's Lunge

- 1) Begin in a Plank position with your hands directly below your shoulders.
- 2) Step your right foot forward to the outer edge of your mat, next to your right pinky finger.
- 3) Relax through your hips and back, letting them sink toward the ground. It is important that you let go and release your hips so that you can experience a deep stretch.
- 4) Breathe and hold for 30 seconds. Switch sides.

The Runner's Lunge works your quads, glutes, core and, more importantly, it stretches your hips, hip flexors, and lower back. This stretch, at the end of a workout, will "reset" your legs and hips and help you recover faster. The Runner's Lunge allows you to rest your hands on the floor so that your legs aren't working as hard as in other lunges and you are able to sink your hips deeper into the stretch to achieve greater benefits.