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Myofascial Stretching Techniques:

For each technique, you will bring the tissue to your comfortable end-range and then hold for 90-120 seconds for one repetition. As the tissue elongates you stretch further into the ROM.

I always tell my patients that I'd rather see them do one repetition and hold it through several elongations than to do multiple quick repetitions.

As this takes some time you can choose what tissue feels the "tightest" each day and spend some time in those areas.

Neck Stretches:

1. Neck Side bending: Sit on your right hand or reach down the therapy ball with your right hand. Bend your neck to the left side as far as you comfortably can.
If you want a greater stretch rest your left hand on your head to apply gentle overpressure. Repeat for the other side.
Can also be done while using a theracane to stabilize the upper shoulder/neck.
2. Neck Rotation: As in the above stretch you will sit on your hands or stretch them down the therapy ball. Turn your head as far as you can to one side. Gently apply overpressure to increase intensity.
Repeat for the opposite side.
Can also be done by using a theracane to stabilize upper shoulder/neck.
3. Chin tuck with Neck Flexion: Sit on hands as above. Begin by tucking your chin as if making a double chin.
Slowly bend neck forward while keeping chin tucked. Apply overpressure if needed with one hand.
Can also be done by using a theracane to stabilize the upper shoulder/neck.

Neck Stretches Using Therapy Ball

*** These stretches should be used as a progression to the above exercises.**

For all below stretches place ball against a wall.

4. Begin by leaning against the ball with your trunk. Slowly slide down the ball until your neck is flexed to a comfortable degree. Hold this position for 90-120 sec. increasing the ROM if you can.

5. Lean sideways against the ball. Slowly lower yourself until your neck is side bent and your shoulder is slightly under the ball. Hold for 90-120 sec. and slowly increase ROM if possible.
You can also rotate your head and move your shoulder to vary the stretch in this position.

Upper Extremity Stretches:

1. **Shoulder Protractors/Retractors:** Reach your arms forward as far as possible allowing your shoulder blades to come forward.
Now bring your elbows back and open your chest as far as possible.
2. **Shoulder Adduction:** Reach your arm all of the way across your chest. Apply overpressure with your opposite arm by pulling the stretched arm toward you.
3. **Shoulder Extension:** Lace fingers together behind your back. Lean forward and stretch arms upward toward your head.
You can also complete this by placing arms on the therapy ball behind you and rolling your body down toward the floor. Hold for 90-120 sec.
4. **Shoulder/Scapular Internal/External Rotation:** Place right arm at 90 degrees shoulder and elbow flexion in front of you. Now wrap your other arm under the elbow and around the lower arm. (You can hold a towel between your hands if needed.)
Lift your arms up toward the ceiling and down toward the floor. Now move them side to side like windshield wipers.
5. **Shoulder Abduction/Pectoral Stretch:** Go to a corner in the room for this stretch. Place elbow on the walls with shoulders and elbows at 90 degrees and fingers pointing toward the ceiling. Lean into the wall as far as you can and hold for 90-120 sec.
6. **Upper Extremity Fascial Stretch:** Place your hand against a wall with fingers pointing away from you. Walk away from the wall in a rotation until you feel a stretch throughout your arm. You can vary this stretch by placing your hands in different places on the wall. Experiment with positioning until you feel the greatest stretch and then hold for 90-120 sec.
7. **Wrist Flexion/Extension with Elbow Extension:** Place the palms of you hands on a table in front of you with your elbows straight and your fingers pointing toward you. Slowly back up until you feel a stretch in your hands and wrists.
Now do the same thing with the dorsum of your hands facing downward. Hold each for 90-120 sec.
If this is too much pressure use your opposite hand to stretch the wrist instead of the table making sure your elbow is straight.

Trunk Stretches Using Therapy Ball:

1. **Backward Stretch:** Begin by sitting on the therapy ball. Slowly walk your feet forward while lying backward over therapy ball.
Stretch arms over your head for a full trunk extension.
You can vary and modify this stretch as follows:
To make it less of a stretch you could use a larger ball, place a pillow under the head, or keep arms flexed at chest.
To make it a greater stretch you could use a smaller ball, place small weights on the arms/legs, and reach out further with the arms/legs.
Hold for 90-120 sec.
2. **Sideward Stretch:** Begin by half-kneeling next to ball. Lean your trunk sideways over the ball and walk your legs out to the side. (Keep legs scissored apart for stability.) Lie sideways over the ball stretching your upper side. Experiment with varying degrees of rotation and reaching to find the maximal stretch, and then hold for 90-120 sec.
You can intensify the stretch by using small weights at wrists.
3. **Forward Stretch:** Lie forward over the ball. You can provide yourself with some low back traction if you use a large ball and “hang” your legs down toward the ground. Vary the amount of stretch by experimenting with how far your head is down toward the ground.
Hold for 90-120 sec.

Lower Extremity Stretches:

1. **Hamstring:** If on therapy ball push ball backward with your hips and straighten knee outward. Lift chest upward and bend forward over thigh.
You can also do this using two chairs. Sit in one chair and place the other chair directly in front of you. Place one leg up on the chair in front of you. Keep chest upward (back arched) and lean forward over your thigh keeping knee straight. Hold 90-120 sec.
2. **Adductors:** If on therapy ball shift ball to one side and place opposite leg out to the side. Lean sideways and slightly forward towards the side with the straight leg. Hold 90-120 sec.
3. **Hip Flexors:** Kneel on floor and place therapy ball in front of you. Support your forearms on therapy ball and straighten one knee as far behind you as possible. Bend knee on the same side and push hip down toward the ground. Hold 90-120 sec.
4. **Iliotibial Band:** Stretch sideways over ball as in #2 of Trunk Stretches: (Begin by half-kneeling next to ball. Lean your trunk sideways over the ball and walk your legs out to the side. Lie sideways over the ball and stretch your sides. Experiment with varying degrees of rotation and reaching to find the maximal stretch, and then hold for 90-120 sec.)

The best way to engage the ITB is to use a cylindrical roll or tennis ball and roll it up the ITB while lying on your side. Find the tight/tender spots and hold 90-120 sec.

5. Piroformis Stretch: Lie on your back and cross one leg over the other. Bring knees toward your chest. Hold 90-120 sec. Repeat on other side.
For a more intense stretch begin on your hands and knees. Cross one leg over the other leg and slide downward toward the ground. Rock your hips slightly side to side until you feel the greatest stretch in your hip. Hold 90-120 sec. Repeat on other side.
6. Heel cords: Place the foot you want to stretch behind you and lunge toward the wall stretching the heel cords on the back leg. It is important that the heel is down and the heel and second toe are in a perpendicular line to the wall.
You can also do this by dropping your heel off of a step while holding the railing. Allow your body weight to stretch the heel cord 90-120 sec.
If you have orthotics do this stretch with them on as this will keep you in subtalar neutral.

Self-Rebounding:

The premise for all of these methods is to gently oscillate oneself and take off your brakes for spontaneous motion. This allows us to engage the ground substance and use the reflexive relaxation response that occurs with “rocking.”

Sitting: While sitting on a therapy ball gently bounce up and down and side to side allowing your arms and trunk to flop and relax in any way that they feel good.

Standing: You can do the same gentle bounce/rock/ rotation while in standing. This works much better when you are on a springy surface such as a mini-trampoline.
You can also place a therapy ball behind you on a wall and lean against it. You gently bounce yourself forward and backward or side to side.

Self-Release Techniques:

There are many tools that can be used for self-release techniques. The principle for using these tools is to understand that “normal” tissue is never hot, hard, or tender.

Becoming proficient at finding the trigger points and areas of discomfort is a wonderful tool for the patient as well as an asset for the therapist because the patient becomes a better historian.

The principles of self-release techniques require finding the trigger points and applying pressure to those areas for at least 90-120 sec. Initially there will be tenderness to palpation. As the tissue releases the tenderness decreases until the next collagenous barrier is reached. The tenderness then increases again until the next release occurs, etc.

These are some of my favorite self-release tools:

Occipivot Pad by Chattanooga Corp.
Sacrowedgy
Theracane
Mobilization wedges
4” playground balls
Tennis balls
Tennis balls with a tube sock
4” foam roller

For Videos on Self-Release Techniques and Tools go to my website:
<http://www.lisasatalino.com/self-help-videos.html>