

Solutions to Tight Muscles



Know Your Joints
Muscle and Joint Care
Suggestions

SUMMARY: Many think they can just stretch away a tight muscle. In many cases that is not the way. The muscle may not be inflexible, but rather weak from lack of use. One of the solutions is to move it. Just going in and out of different postures can help dramatically. I also recommend mobility exercises and dynamic stretching. One of the best solutions I have found is strengthening. Read on for more details.

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First two below I highly recommend.

Move More and Strengthen things up!



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Move more: Should include dynamic stretches, which are active movements where joints and muscles go through a full range of motion. This is perhaps our most powerful tool. If you work at a desk or don't move much throughout the day, simply moving more often should help. Rest equals rust.

Strengthening: Another great tool. A tight muscle is often an overworked muscle (static postures). Stronger muscles can better meet the demands placed upon them, and therefore feel less tight.

Improve your movement patterns: Can you do a proper squat, hip hinge, lunge, overhead press, and row, with good technique? Often, improving these patterns helps to resolve muscle tightness or tension because you are loading the joints and muscles in a way that optimizes function.

Manage stress, practice mindful breathing, and develop good nutrition habits and sleep hygiene: Do you have a breathing or meditation practice, or other ways to unwind and manage that stress? Do you ever slow down and take deep breaths? Breathing is so powerful. Eating healthy is sleeping well does the whole body good.

Static Stretching: I am an advocate of appropriate static stretching ([see self assessment](#)), and also wary of compulsive or over-stretching, because at best there's no need for it, and at worst it can exacerbate some issues. If you've been in a static position for a while, have compressed some muscles, or want to do some light movement to relieve stress, then stretching can be great. If you've had some *objective tests* of muscle length performed ([see self assessment](#)) and need to improve a few areas or if you feel it makes you feel relaxed - go for it. However, you should feel better after you stretch, and if you always need to stretch the same areas, or if the sensation of tightness, tension, or pain returns quickly, then we should try something else.

Tissue work: This one many people seek out and can offer benefit. Massage, foam rolling, or self-tissue work on a tight muscle can make it feel better. But just like stretching, this may not get to the root cause of the problem. If you find yourself trying to dig into an uncomfortable area all the time, then there's probably something else going on.

If Tightness does not go away get evaluated: If there's an injury to a joint, nerve, ligament, or other structure, we need to treat that appropriately with a comprehensive approach. Talk to your doctor or seek out a physical therapist.