

# STRETCHLYING

## 1 SIT WITH YOUR KNEES BENT AND YOUR FEET FLAT ON THE BED



Your legs should be over (not resting on) a pillow.

*Stretchlying elongates your spine in such a way that provides therapeutic benefits and increases sleep quality. Other benefits include: decompressed spinal discs and nerves, improved circulation around the spine, and improved breathing patterns.*

## 2 USING YOUR ELBOWS, LOWER YOUR UPPER BODY TO ABOUT A 30° ANGLE



Bend your arms so your forearms are resting on the bed and your elbows form a 90° angle with the bed.

## 3 SLOWLY LOWER YOUR BACK ONTO THE BED WHILE LENGTHENING YOUR SPINE



*Notes: A common mistake is to arch the back as you attempt to lengthen it. In fact, arching shortens the back. Concentrate on positioning each vertebra as far from the previous one as possible.*

*A nearly universal tendency is to over-tuck the pelvis. With the discs decompressed by stretchlying, this will likely do no harm. However, if you feel any discomfort, use the maneuver in Step 10.*

Press your elbows into the bed and down toward your feet to help elongate your spine. Focus on lowering your back onto the bed vertebra by vertebra, positioning each vertebra as far from the previous one as possible. When your elbows no longer give leverage, lie down the rest of the way, placing your head and upper shoulders on a pillow.



## 4 CHECK THE POSITION OF YOUR PILLOW

Your shoulders, neck, and head should be slightly raised on the edge of the pillow. You may have to adjust the position of the pillow if, after elongating your spine, you are too high or low on the pillow.



*Notes: If you are too low on the pillow, it can cause your neck to curve forward. If you are too high on the pillow, it can cause your neck to sway.*

## 5 GENTLY ELONGATE YOUR NECK

Lift your head from the pillow. Use your hands to guide the back of head away from your torso as you lay your head back down on the pillow. It is important to do this gently.



## 6 SLIDE YOUR SHOULDERS DOWN ALONG YOUR SPINE



Earlier, you used your elbows to position your back, so now your shoulders may be hiked up towards your ears. Because you cannot complete a full shoulder roll with the cushion behind your shoulders, simply slide your shoulders down, and widen across your chest.

## 7 POSITION YOUR ARMS COMFORTABLY AT YOUR SIDES

Some people find it comfortable to bend their arms softly at the elbow, resting their hands on their abdomen. Others prefer to rest their arms under or above the head.



Lying with palms up orients arms and shoulders well.

## 8 STRAIGHTEN AND RELAX YOUR LEGS ONTO THE PILLOW



Gently rotate your legs and knees outward from the hip joint. The pillow beneath your knees supports them in a slightly bent position, relieving stress on your low back.

## 9 CHECK FOR A GAP BETWEEN YOUR LOW BACK AND THE BED



Sense whether your low back is in contact with the bed, or whether you can slide the fingers of one hand into a natural gap between your back and the bed. If there is no gap, your spine is not in a neutral position. Chances are you are in a strong tuck, which you will release in the next step.

## 10 IF YOUR PELVIS IS TUCKED, REPEAT THE STEPS IN THIS LESSON, STEADYING YOUR PELVIS WITH YOUR HANDS IN STEP 3

When lengthening your spine in Step 3, it is easy to unwittingly tuck your pelvis. The most effective way for your hands to steady your pelvis is with the fingers facing toward your feet and the thumb hooked behind the rim of your pelvis (the iliac crests).



# 11 RELAX YOUR WHOLE BODY

Try to locate any tension in your body and release it. Lie in this position for two or three minutes, letting your muscles completely relax. If you are not already asleep and wish to stretch your spine even further, repeat steps 2-8.



## FURTHER RESOURCES

- 1 "8 Steps to a Pain-Free Back" by Esther Gokhale  
[shop.gokhalemethod.com/](http://shop.gokhalemethod.com/)
- 2 Free online or in-person posture workshop  
[gokhalemethod.com/classes-services/free-classes](http://gokhalemethod.com/classes-services/free-classes)
- 3 Gokhale Method Foundations Course  
[gokhalemethod.com/classes-services/gmf](http://gokhalemethod.com/classes-services/gmf)

### IDEAL AND COMPROMISED BODY POSITIONING

## HOW DOES THIS HELP?

✓

*Lying stretched*

*A pillow under the shoulders flattens the low back.*

*Elongated neck*

✗

*Lying rounded*

*Lying swayed*

*Lying compressed*

*No pillow under shoulders can result in a swayed low back.*

*Compressed neck*

*This resource is an excerpt from "8 Steps to a Pain-Free Back" by Esther Gokhale.*