



*Self-care suggestions brought to you by:*



## *Immediate stress relief through muscle relaxation*

It is important to intentionally decompress and remove stress from the body on a regular basis for optimal health. Replace muscle tightness and feelings of angst with peace and calm for effective and immediate stress relief by following a few simple steps.

*Before* you get started, know that using muscles you haven't used like this in a long time may result in some soreness the next day. That's normal. On the other hand, if exercising one of the muscle groups causes sharp pain, a muscle spasm or cramping, stop and don't do it. Consult with your doctor. However, you may continue with all the muscle groups that do not cause discomfort.

**Ready to feel relaxed? Let's go!**

*Sit or lie down.* Your favorite chair or your bed are both great options, but not needed. This can be done anywhere, even in a waiting room, break room or in a car.

*Take a deep breath in,* through your nose if possible, and release it slowly. Continue breathing nice and deeply throughout the relaxation exercises.



*For each muscle group* you will tighten or tense the muscle for 5 seconds, then relax for 15-30 seconds, continuing a steady slow breathing pattern throughout.

*Point your toes* as far as they will go, tighten your calf, hold for a count of 5 seconds, relax.

*Pull your toes up* as far as they will go, tighten your shin, hold for 5 seconds, relax.



## How does this help?

Progressive muscle relaxation helps relieve stress, anxiety, fatigue and muscle tension. This includes those experiencing physical pain or serious health issues (e.g. patients with cancer undergoing chemotherapy).

You can do these exercises as often as you like and virtually anywhere. If you sense tension in a particular muscle or body part at any point in your day, you can do an exercise for just that area to help you relax.



*Next, straighten one leg out* in front of you, squeeze the thigh muscle tight for 5 seconds, relax. Then do the other leg.

*Squeeze your legs together*, tighten the inner thighs, hold for 5 seconds, relax.

*Squeeze your buttocks tight*, hold for 5 seconds, relax.

*Tighten your tummy*, hold for 5 seconds, relax.

*Extend your arms* out to your sides, extend your wrists and fingers wide open and palms up, hold for 5 seconds, relax.

*Hug yourself tight*, hold for 5 seconds, relax.

*Shrug your shoulders* up to your ears, hold tight for 5 seconds, relax.

*Squeeze your shoulder* blades tight together, hold for 5 seconds, relax.

*Smile wide*, the biggest grin you have, hold for 5 seconds, relax completely.

*Take one final deep breath in* and release. You are done!

