

## *Stress Reduction Tips from Dr. Stephen Green*

# Muscle Relaxation Exercise

Back and neck pain is almost always accompanied by muscle tension. Muscle tension is also often the cause of spinal problems which in turn lead to more muscle tension. *A vicious circle.* Herbs and medications can decrease pain due to inflammation, but inflammation is still only a *symptom*. Chiropractic adjustments relieve both misalignment and balance the musculoskeletal system.

However, if muscle tension is decreased, pain will also be decreased and even avoided by *preventing* inflammation caused by excessive spasm of muscles. You can prevent inflammation and pain by reducing muscle tension and/or reduce pain by reducing muscle tension after inflammation has begun.

The following is a simple exercise that can allow you, at any time, to release some of the tension whether caused by excessive strain, misalignment, or emotional stress.

This exercise can be done at any time you are reminded without special equipment OR a great investment of time. It can be done as your live your life.

**First**, you must find muscles that need relaxing. Tightness and knots are a clue. For example feel the muscle between your neck and shoulders—you will often find tender knots or feel pain at the base of you skull in spots. Look in the mirror , see if your shoulders are higher than normal. Is one shoulder higher than the other? Is you head tipped? Note how this *feels*.

**Second**, Take one group at a time (for example neck and shoulder muscles). Now *tighten* those muscles (shrug your shoulders up). Hold this for a count of 5. NOTE: If tightening causes sharp pain—back off—just let go—your body will know what to do.

**Third**, Then *let go* of these muscles *suddenly*. (shoulders should drop quickly) IF the muscles relax slowly, you will not have the desired effect. Try again until you can *let go of the tension* (like dropping a ball).

**Fourth**, *Stop. How does it feel?* . Maybe even feel the muscle with your hand. Look in the mirror. But mainly just feel how it *feels in your body*.

Combine this exercise with the *Sighing Exercise* or *Deep Breathing to release emotional excess* .

Now you can move on to other muscle groups, one at a time, in groups up and down you spine. It is simple but requires practice. You must remind yourself that you CAN do this and just do it even if you don't see immediate results. It may be necessary to delegate reminders to someone else; use "Post-its"; or put a memo on your reminder calendar on the computer. Be creative.

After you have become skilled at knowing which muscles are tight, and 'contacting' those muscles by tightening them first, you will be able to go directly to the muscle and *let it go*. With practice you can gain more control over your tension which in itself will reduce stress simply because you will have empowered yourself in the face of stress.

*You Can break the vicious cycle of pain and tension.*

This exercise is a shortened version of "Progressive Muscle Relaxation" as taught by Mind/Body therapists. Using this this technique over a longer period of time and adding visualization images of relaxation you can go from head to toe group by group, muscle by muscle. Add calming music to enhance the process. There are complete descriptions of this process in numerous Stress Reduction manuals. The short exercise above is intended to be a tool to use in your daily life—as you sit at your desk, while you're driving, standing around waiting and many everyday situations.

*Let muscle relaxation empower your life—practice regularly.*

Release misalignments and imbalance with Chiropractic care. Use self care can reduce the need for outside help.  
If you have questions, Call Dr. Stephen Green at (845) 294-9990