

Nearly effortless stretches

Physical movement increases blood flow, and therefore the supply of oxygen, to the part of the body that is being moved – bringing new fuel (and thus energy) to the cellular structures. This blood flow also removes accumulated waste products, which can cause harmful imbalances if allowed to build up.

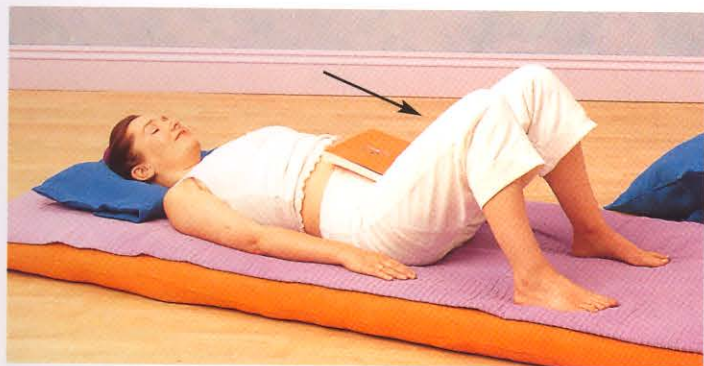
Awareness focused on any part of the body also brings vital energy to that part, since energy follows thought. The following exercises are done lying down because this allows maximum relaxation of the nervous system.

10 Pelvic movements with focused awareness

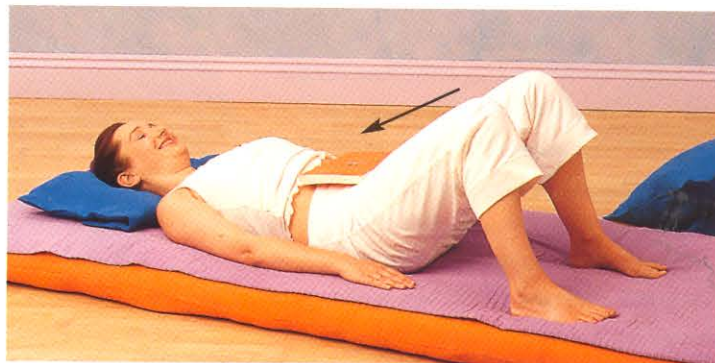
These relaxing movements encourage increased awareness, blood flow and flexibility in the pelvic area. Feel that you are opening up to new healing energy and letting go of any tension there.



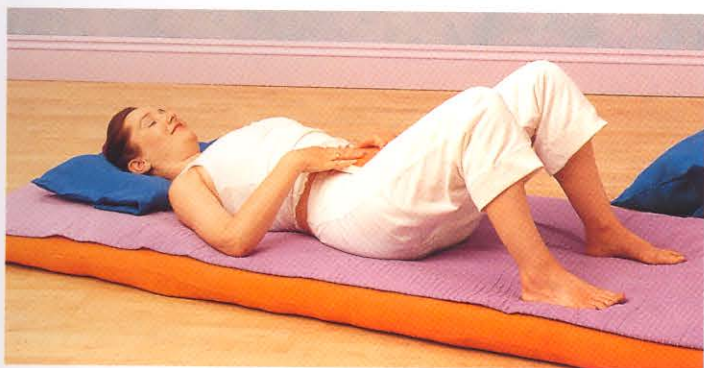
◁ 1 Lie on your back, with a large book and three cushions beside you. Place one cushion under your head and tuck your chin in to lengthen the back of your neck. Bend your knees and plant your feet hip-width apart on the floor. Place the book on your lower abdomen, so that it is evenly balanced upon the hip bones and the pubic bone, then stretch your arms alongside your body with the palms down to support you.



△ 2 As you breathe in press on your hands and arch your lower back as much as you can, so that the navel and hip bones rise and the front “rim” of your pelvis (and the book) is tipped towards your feet.



△ 3 As you breathe out pull the navel against the spine and press on your hands to lift the coccyx just off the floor, so that the pelvic front “rim” (and the book) is now tipped backward, towards your head. Keep your waist against the floor and move the lower spine only. Repeat steps 1–3 several times.



△ 4 Now place your hands, in a relaxed pose, on top of the book and breathe deeply. Feel the movements of the book over the pelvic area as you breathe in and out slowly for several minutes.

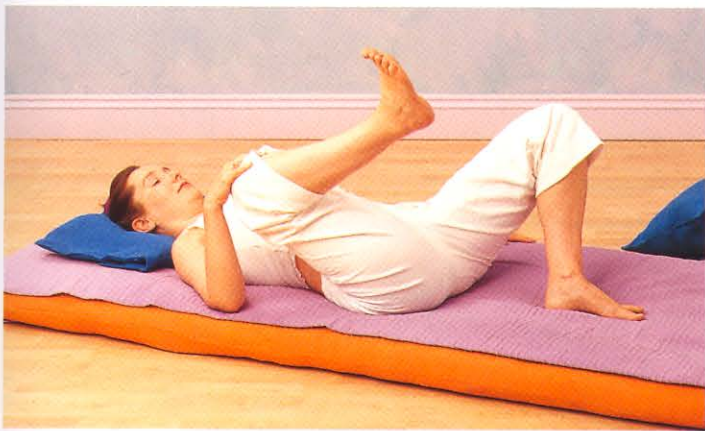


△ 5 Remove the book and bring the soles of your feet together so that your knees fall outward. Support them with the remaining two cushions. Place your hands, palms up, beside you in a gesture of openness and complete surrender. Relax for several minutes.

11 Improving flexibility and muscle tone

Here are three simple exercises to improve flexibility in the spine and hips and to strengthen the abdominal muscles. They may seem strenuous to begin with, but strength and flexibility will improve rapidly with practice. Relax afterwards and feel the effects of the exercises on your muscles and your breath. Keep your coccyx on the floor throughout.

▷ 1 Lie on your back with a cushion under your head and your arms, palms down, alongside the body to support you. Bend your right leg, keeping your left leg stretched with the ankle flexed. Make large cycling circles with your right leg until you feel tired. Then rest with both legs stretched out and become aware of the muscles you have been working in the right side of the lower abdomen. Repeat the same number of circles with your left leg, and then rest again.



△ 2 With your left knee bent and left foot planted firmly on the floor, take hold of your right knee and move the right leg in circles from the hip. This releases tightness in the groin and hip joint. Rest, then repeat the movements on the other side.



△ 3 Now work with both knees and the breath. Breathe in as you take the knees out to the sides. Breathe out as you pull your knees close to your chest to stretch your lower back. Repeat several times then rest.

12 Lying twist

This powerful but simple twisting exercise opens up and relaxes both the shoulders and the hips. This in turn helps to make the entire spine more flexible, creating space between the vertebrae.

▷ Lie down, raise your arms, bent at the elbows, and place them on the floor above or beside your head. This position opens and lifts the chest. Bend your knees and place your feet together on the floor. Breathe in. As you breathe out lower both knees to the right, ensuring that you keep them together. The aim is to place your right knee on the floor without letting your left elbow leave the floor, but only take it as far as feels comfortable. As you breathe in raise your knees to the centre, still keeping them pressed together. As you breathe out lower them to the left and raise them again as you breathe in. Repeat until tired, then relax for several minutes.

