
Muscle tension is commonly associated with stress, anxiety and fear as part of a process that helps our bodies prepare for potentially dangerous situations. Even though some of those situations may not actually be dangerous, our bodies respond in the same way. Sometimes we don't even notice how our muscles become tense, but perhaps you clench your teeth slightly so your jaw feels tight, or maybe your shoulders become. Muscle tension can also be associated with backaches and tension headaches.

One method of reducing muscle tension that people have found helpful is through a technique called Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). In progressive muscle relaxation exercises, you tense up particular muscles and then relax them, and then you practise this technique consistently.

When you are beginning to practice progressive muscle relaxation exercises keep in mind the following points.

If you have any injuries, or a history of physical problems that may cause muscle pain, always consult your doctor before you start.

Minimise the distraction to your five senses. Such as turning off the TV and radio, and using soft lighting.

Use a chair that comfortably seats your body, including your head. Wear loose clothing, and take off your shoes.

Avoid practicing after big, heavy meals, and do not practice after consuming any intoxicants, such as alcohol.

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- 1 Once you've set aside the time and place for relaxation, slow down your breathing and give yourself permission to relax.
 - 2 When you are ready to begin, tense the muscle group described. Make sure you can feel the tension, but not so much that you feel a great deal of pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately 5 seconds.
 - 3 Relax the muscles and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds. It may be helpful to say something like "Relax" as you relax the muscle.
 - 4 When you have finished the relaxation procedure, remain seated for a few moments allowing yourself to become alert.

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1. _____ . Make a fist with your right hand.
 2. _____ Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to "make a muscle".