

Flexibility Is the Key to Your Health

STRETCHES THAT WILL PAY YOUR BODY BACK AS YOU AGE

As we age, we often lose flexibility. It can make stretching harder—but also more important. “It’s funny how simple stretches can change your life,” says Janice Lennard, a yoga and Pilates instructor based in Rancho Mirage, Calif. “You hold your body straighter and move more easily, and it puts your mind in a happy place.” A 2019 analysis of nearly two dozen studies found that older adults who practice yoga report better balance and flexibility, and even improved mental health and sleep.

As a lifelong yogi, Janice knows that a flexible body is just as important as having flexibility in your Medicare plan. Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies offer a number of Medicare options that support her health journey, so Janice can have a say in how she lives and cares for herself.

Support your own health and flexibility by incorporating these four stretches into your morning routine:



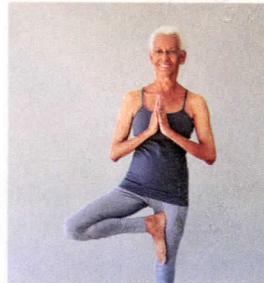
Standing Forward Bend: Stand straight up, with your feet slightly apart. Bring your arms straight up, fingers pointing at the sky. Slowly bend forward at the waist, opening your arms to the side and then down, bringing them together on your calves. Stretch to reach your ankles or place palms flat on the ground if it feels comfortable. Hug your legs closer to increase the stretch on your lower back and hamstrings.

Standing Split Pose: Stand straight up with your feet together. Shift your weight onto your right foot. While keeping your back straight, bend forward and raise your left leg behind you. Keep the leg straight or with a slight bend. As you pivot forward, keep your shoulders square and try touching your fingers to the floor. Lean further into your hands slowly, if it feels comfortable. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds before returning to standing. Repeat on opposite side.



Upward Dog: Lie face-down on a mat with legs straight, tops of your feet on the mat. Place hands on the mat, halfway up your ribcage. Inhale, press hands down, and slowly lift your upper body off the mat as you exhale. Draw shoulders back and press the tops of your feet into the mat. Slowly ease into the stretch. Your knees may lift off the mat. Upward Dog stretches your chest and abdominal muscles.

Tree Pose: Stand with feet together and palms in prayer position at the heart. Slowly raise one foot and rest it on the inside of the opposite calf or thigh. For an added challenge, raise arms above your head and stretch hands toward the ceiling. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds. Repeat with the other leg. Tree Pose is good for stretching your hips, knees and shoulders.



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