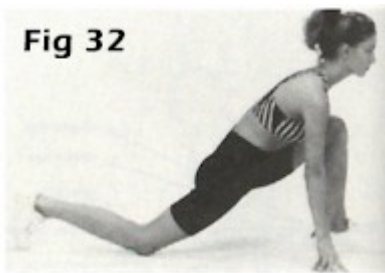


HIP FLEXOR & HAMSTRING STRETCHES

Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch

Kneel on a mat or towel with one leg flexed in front of you as illustrated - your weight should be evenly distributed so that your position is stable, although you can use your hands at either side of your body for extra support. Note that the knee of the front leg is positioned directly over the front foot. From this position and keeping your spine long and shoulders down, push your hips forward. You may find that you have to take your rear knee further back before you can feel the stretch along the front of this thigh. Repeat on the other side, breathing easily throughout the exercise.



Lying Hip Abductor Stretch 1 (Fig 41)

Lie flat on the floor and flex one leg up towards you whilst keeping the other leg extended. Ease the flexed leg across your extended leg, moving it further into a position of stretch with light pressure from your opposite hand. Your back and shoulders must stay in contact with the floor throughout the movement. You will feel the stretch along the outside of your hip and thigh. Breathe easily throughout the exercise.



Lying Hip Abductor Stretch 2 (Fig 42)

Lie flat on the floor with both legs flexed at the knee. Now cross your legs and use the weight of the top leg to bring the lower leg down towards the floor. Keep your back, shoulders and the foot of the lower leg in contact with floor throughout the movement. You will feel the stretch along the outside of the hip and thigh. Repeat with the other leg. Breathe easily throughout the exercise.



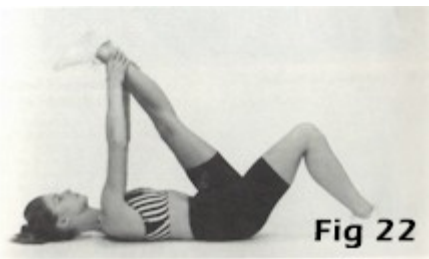
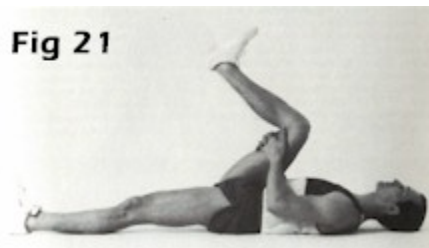
Standing Hamstring Stretch (Fig 19 & 20)

Stand tall with good posture. Now flex at the knees and hips until you can easily rest your chest on your thighs. Reach round with your arms and grasp your calves to bring your chest and thighs firmly together. From this position, try and straighten your legs as much as possible, whilst still keeping your chest firmly pressed against your thighs. When you reach your furthest position you will feel the stretch along the backs of your thighs. Release the stretch by flexing the knees. Breathe easily throughout the movement.



Lying Hamstring Stretch (Fig 21)

Lie flat on the floor with your knees flexed to approximately ninety degrees. Raise your left leg, grasping it loosely behind the thigh with both hands. Now ease this leg as close to your chest as possible, keeping your other leg straight along the floor. You will feel the stretch along the back of the flexed thigh. Repeat with the other leg. Breathe easily throughout. If you can perform this exercise relatively easily, then go back to your original starting position and this time try and straighten your raised leg, before easing it closer towards your chest (Fig 22). Again, you will feel the stretch along the back of the raised thigh; although this time you will experience the sensation of stretch throughout the length of the thigh, and not just towards the top, as in the previous exercise. In both exercises, keep your back flat along the length of the floor. Repeat with the other leg. Breathe easily throughout the movement.



There are several variations of the above positions. The easier lying hamstring stretch can be varied by changing the position of the lower leg as illustrated in Fig 23. Do not pull forcefully on the lower leg, however, but ease it into position. You will feel the stretch further round to outside of the back of the thigh.

Similarly, if you can perform the exercise shown in Fig 39 with relative ease, you can combine the exercise with a movement for the inner thigh muscles as illustrated





(Fig 24). Several exercise for the hamstring muscles also involve the lower back. For example the sit-and-reach test of general flexibility is basically as assessment of hamstring and lower back mobility. It can also be used as an exercise in its own right, by reaching pine to loosely grasp your lower leg, ankles or feet according to your range of movement (Fig 25).



Seated Hamstring and Groin Stretch (Fig 26)

Sit tall with both legs fully outstretched. Flex your right knee so that the right foot rests comfortably along your left inner thigh, with the right knee as close as possible to the floor. Keeping your spine long and your shoulders down away from your ears, hinge forwards from the hips to reach towards your flexed left foot. Go as far forwards as possible, then relax your spine to reach even further forwards, holding this stretch position. You will feel the stretch along the back of the outstretched leg, and along the inside and rear of the flexed lg. Repeat with the other leg, breathing easily throughout.

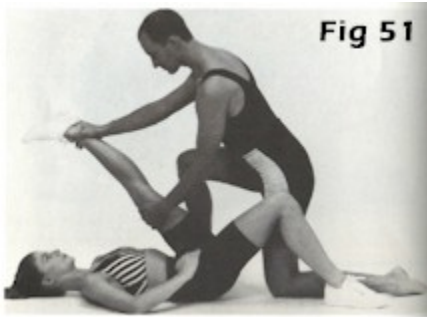


Standing Hip and Thigh Stretch (Fig 27)



This exercise also stretches the muscles of the front of the thigh, specially the rectus femoris. Stand tall with good posture in front of a firm chair or stool. Raise one foot up on to the chair back easing your body towards this foot so that chest and thigh come closer together. Rest your hands loosely on the raised knee and keep your spine and back leg straight and your shoulders down away from your ears. Ease as far forwards as possible and hold your position. You will feel the stretch along the back of the thigh of the raised leg. Repeat on the other side, breathing easily throughout.

Partner Hamstring Stretch (Fig 51)



Lie completely flat on the floor, with your lower back and shoulders pressed firmly into the floor. Your partner sits to one side of you as shown and takes hold of your left leg at the back of the ankle and just above the knee to keep the leg fully extended. He or she gently raises the leg towards the trunk as far as possible, making sure that your hips do not leave the floor. The stretch will be experienced along the back of the raised leg. Repeat on the opposite side.

Partner Hip and Thigh Stretch (Fig 52)

Lie completely flat on the floor, with your lower back and shoulders pressed firmly into the floor. Your partner kneels to one side of you as illustrated and places his or her left hand on your right thigh just above the knee. The partner places his or her right hand just above the back of your left knee. Pressure is gently applied by your partner through both hands to keep your right thigh down against the floor, whilst the left thigh is eased towards your chest. The exercise is repeated on the opposite side.

