

Exercise and Stretch of the Day

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Today's Muscle is: The Latissimus Dorsi (a.k.a The Back Muscles)

Why are these muscles important to stretch and strengthen?

The latissimus dorsi is often called into play in everyday activities. These activities include someone using the railing to help pull themselves up the stairs, to opening a heavy door or picking up bags from the floor. It functions to stabilize your back while extending your shoulders. When doing the band pull apart exercise (see below), this movement engages those muscles. It also helps in activating the back of the shoulders. This activation helps in pulling back rounded shoulders into a more neutral position.

A Stretch for the Back Muscles: *Sphinx Stretch*

The sphinx stretch is a gentle backbend that allows you to be both active and relaxed. It lengthens the abdominal muscles, strengthens the spine, and firms the buttocks.

- Begin by lying face-down on the floor with your legs extending behind you, hip-width apart.
- Gently engage your lower back, buttocks, and thighs as you lift your head and chest.
- Press firmly into your palms facing down.
- Stay strong in your lower back and abdominals.
- Press your pelvis into the floor.
- Raise your upper body trying to bend your torso at the belly button and keeping your hips on the floor.
- Hold this pose for 15 to 30 seconds and release.
- Complete 1-3 sets of 3 – 5 reps.



An Exercise for the Back Muscles: *Band Pull Apart*

- Grab the band at each end and hold it out in front of you.
- Make sure you grab the band with equal amount of distance. *If one side is longer than the other the resistance will be different on each side.
- With your arms straight, pull the band apart as far as possible.
- Keeping a straight posture, hold it in the final position squeezing your shoulder blades together and hold for 1-3 seconds.
- Return to the starting position.
- Complete 8 to 12 reps for 1-3 sets.

