

## Muscle relaxation exercise

This exercise helps to reduce physical and mental tension.

**Practice this exercise regularly and at the first signs of muscle tension.**

1. Sit in a comfortable chair in a quiet room.
2. Put your feet flat on the floor and rest your hands in your lap.
3. CLOSE YOUR EYES.
4. Do the SLOW BREATHING EXERCISE for 3 minutes.
5. After 3 minutes of slow breathing, start the muscle relaxation exercise: tense each of your muscle groups for 10 seconds, then relax for 10 seconds, in the following order:
  - ◆ **Hands** – clench your hands into fists, then relax;
  - ◆ **Lower arms** – bend your hands up at the wrists, then relax;
  - ◆ **Upper arms** – bend your arms up at the elbow, then relax;
  - ◆ **Shoulders** – lift your shoulders up, then relax;
  - ◆ **Neck** – stretch your neck gently to the left, then forward, then to the right, then to the back in a slow rolling motion, then relax;
  - ◆ **Forehead and scalp** – raise your eyebrows, then relax;
  - ◆ **Eyes** – close your eyes tightly, then relax;
  - ◆ **Jaw** – clench your teeth, then relax;
  - ◆ **Chest** – breathe in deeply, then breathe out and relax;
  - ◆ **Stomach** – pull your tummy in, then relax;
  - ◆ **Upper back** – pull your shoulders forward, then relax;
  - ◆ **Lower back** – while sitting, roll your back into a smooth arc, then relax;
  - ◆ **Buttocks** – tighten your buttocks, then relax;
  - ◆ **Thighs** – push your feet firmly into the floor, then relax;
  - ◆ **Calves** – lift your toes off the ground, then relax; and,
  - ◆ **Feet** – gently curl your toes down, then relax.
6. Continue slow breathing for 5 more minutes, enjoying the feeling of relaxation.
7. As you become better at relaxation, it can be more interesting to combine these exercises with memories of relaxing situations (eg. lying on a beach, doing a favourite activity).

*(A full session of relaxation takes about 15 to 20 minutes)*

**Once you are good at relaxing your muscles, start relaxing tense parts of your body during the day while you are going about your daily activities.**