

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Sit in a comfortable chair--reclining arm chairs are ideal. Bed is okay too. Get as comfortable as possible--no tight clothes, no shoes, don't cross your legs. Take a deep breath; let it out slowly. Again. What you'll be doing is alternately tensing and relaxing specific groups of muscles. Just tense each muscle group enough to feel the tensions, don't do it as hard as you can. After tension, a muscle will be more relaxed than prior to the tensing. Concentrate on the feel of the muscles, specifically the contrast between tension and relaxation. In time, you will recognize tension in any specific muscle and be able to reduce that tension.

Don't tense muscles other than the specific group at each step. Don't hold your breath, grit your teeth, or squint! Breathe slowly and evenly and think only about the tension-relaxation contrast. Do the entire sequence once a day if you can, until you feel you are able to control your muscle tensions. Be careful: If you have problems with pulled muscles, broken bones, or any medical contraindication for physical activities, consult your doctor first.

1. **Hands.** The fists are tensed; relaxed. The fingers are extended; relaxed.
2. **Biceps and triceps.** The biceps are tensed (make a muscle--but shake your hands to make sure not tensing them into a fist); relaxed (drop your arm to the chair--really drop them). The triceps are tensed (try to bend your arms the wrong way); relaxed (drop them).
3. **Shoulders.** Pull them back (careful with this one); relax them. Push the shoulders forward(hunch); relax.
4. **Mouth.** The mouth is opened as far as possible; relaxed. The lips are brought together or pursed as tightly as possible; relaxed.
5. **Eyes.** Open them as wide as possible (frown your brow); relax. Close your eyes tightly (squint); relax. Make sure you completely relax the eyes, forehead, and nose after they are tensed..
6. **Thighs.** Extend legs and raise them about 6" off the floor or the foot rest--but don't tense the stomach' relax. Dig your feet (heels) into the floor or foot rest; relax.
7. **Stomach.** Pull in the stomach as far as possible; relax completely. Push out the stomach or tense it as if you were preparing for a punch in the gut; relax.
8. **Calves and feet.** Point the toes (without raising the legs); relax.; then relax.
9. **Toes.** With legs relaxed, dig your toes into the floor; relax. Bend the toes up; relax.