

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

The body responds to tense thoughts or situations with muscle tension, which can cause pain or discomfort. Deep muscle relaxation reduces the muscle tension as well as general mental anxiety. You can use a pre-recorded tape to help you go through all the muscle groups or you can do it by just tensing and relaxing each muscle group. Deep muscle relaxation is effective in combating stress related health problems and often helps people get to sleep.

Various Muscle Groups and How to Relax Them: Tense each muscle group for 4 to 10 seconds, then give yourself 10 to 20 seconds to release them and relax.

1. Hands: by clenching them.
2. Wrists & Forearms: by extending them and bending the hands back at the wrists.
3. Biceps & Upper Arms: by clenching your hands into fists, bending your arms at the elbows, and flexing your biceps.
4. Shoulders: by shrugging them.
5. Forehead: by wrinkling it into a deep frown.
6. Around the *Eyes* and the bridge of the *Nose*: by closing the eyes as tightly as possible (remove contact lenses before attempting this exercise)
7. Cheeks & Jaws: by grinning from ear to ear.
8. Around the Mouth: by pressing the lips together tightly.
9. Back of the Neck: by pressing the head back hard.
10. Front of the Neck: by touching chin to chest.
11. Chest: by taking a deep breath and holding it, then exhaling.
12. Back: by arching the back up and away from the support surface.
13. Stomach: by sucking it into a tight knot.
14. Hips & Buttocks: by pressing the buttocks together tightly.
15. Thighs: by clenching them hard.
16. Lower Legs: by pointing your toes towards your face, as if trying to bring the toes up to touch your head.
17. Lower Legs: by pointing your toes away and curling them downward at the same time.

When you are finished, take five deep breaths coming from the stomach upward into the lungs and release slowly in the opposite direction.