



**Dave's
NMT & Fitness**

Suboccipital Stretch

Stretch for the muscles that attach the base of the head onto the neck.

Basic Type: PNF (Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation)

These instructions are designed to be a reminder for those who have already been taught the stretch by a qualified instructor. If you have not been previously taught and the stretch produces any undesirable effects, stop immediately and consult a professional.

Breathing for all stretches should be: Inhale before. Exhale as you move into the stretch position. Wait for the body to respond. Inhale again while returning to the start position.

Stretch is performed while lying on ones back with support under the knees.

To safely isolate the suboccipital muscles, it is very important that the correct head and hand positions be used.

- 1) Turn head to both sides and take note of which direction turns more easily and which demonstrates restriction. We will always begin the stretch, turning the head, toward the direction with the least restriction. If there is not a noticeable difference, it does not matter which direction you turn first.
- 2) We will assume that the upper neck appeared tighter when we turned to the right; therefore we will begin by turning the head to the left.
- 3) Turn the head just a few degrees and relax the head onto the floor. Bring your right hand up and place it on the right side of the face surrounding the ear. The web between the thumb and first finger should be gently touching the bottom of the earlobe.
- 4) Open the thumb until it slips off the base of the skull. The thumb will remain in this position, just under the base of the skull and just to the right of the center of the back of the neck, throughout the stretch.
- 5) Turn the head as far to the left as it will go without eliciting any pain or restriction. The right hand should have followed.
- 6) Allow the right forearm to rest on the chest as to keep the contact of the right thumb from applying too much pressure on the suboccipital muscles it is holding.
- 7) Place the left hand on the right side of the face. This will keep the head from turning to the right while the stretch is performed.
- 8) You are now in proper position to perform the stretch.

In performing the stretch, it is essential that the left hand and right thumb positions be held firmly, while the rest of the body relax as much as possible.

- 1) VERY GENTLY attempt to turn the head to the right while the force of the right thumb and left hand prevent the head and neck from actually moving. This action stretches the suboccipital muscles.
- 2) After just a few seconds the muscles will respond by loosening slightly. If the attempt to turn is gentle enough, the release will be perceived as an inability to feel the effort of turning. If this occurs, resist the temptation to turn more vigorously. The stretch is complete. (If the release is not felt, maintain the stretch for 5 seconds, or as long as it takes to count through the color spectrum. (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet).
- 3) Relax and return the head to the neutral position and repeat the stretch to the opposite side substituting right for left and left for right in the instructions.

The stretch should be repeated 3 times to each side, alternating left and right