

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation may be done sitting or lying down.

Tense up a group of muscles - tense hard but don't strain - and hold for about 5-10 seconds. **Release** the tension from the muscles **all at once**. Stay relaxed for 10 - 20 seconds.

Some people prefer to count, for example:

Tense for count of 5

Release all at once

Rest for count of 10

...or

Tense for count of 10

Release all at once

Rest for count of 20

Pay close attention to the feeling of relaxation when you release the contracted muscles.

When going through the muscle groups, some people start with the hands, others with the feet. You may do one side of the body (hand, arm, leg, foot) at a time or do both sides at the same time. Listening to a prerecorded script that guides you through the process is helpful.

Sample of Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise:

- Hands - Clench fists
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Right forearms and hands - Extend arm, elbow locked, and bend hand back at the wrist
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Upper right arm - Bend arms at elbows and flex biceps
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Forehead - wrinkle forehead into frown, tense, release, rest, and/or raise eyebrows
tense for 5, release, rest for 10

- Eyes - close eyes tightly, hold and release
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Mouth - press lips tightly together
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Jaw - open mouth wide and stick out tongue
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Buttocks - tense
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Abdomen
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Chest
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Back - arch back
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Neck and shoulders
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Thighs
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Lower legs and feet - Point toes toward shin
tense for 5, release, rest for 10
- Feet - Point toes and curl them under
tense for 5, release, rest for 10

You may repeat relaxing and tensing muscle groups that have you have already done to relax them further.