

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation is a way to release stress by relaxing the muscles and lowering blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration. Though this technique is simple, it may take some practice before it comes naturally.

This is a typical relaxation exercise:

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Remember to breathe slowly and deeply.
2. Tense up a group of muscles - tense hard but don't strain - and hold for about 5-10 seconds.
3. Release the tension from the muscles all at once.
4. Stay relaxed for 10 - 20 seconds. Some people prefer to count.

For example:

Tense for count of 5 and release all at once ... Rest for count of 10

Tense for count of 10 and release all at once ... Rest for count of 20

Pay close attention to your feelings of relaxation, when you release the contracted muscles:

Start with your hands or feet and move through the muscle groups in a progression. You may prefer to do one side of the body at a time. You may also repeat relaxing and tensing muscle groups that you have already done, to relax them further. Some people prefer to listen to a recording as a guide through progressive muscle relaxation. You can audio stream Mindfulness & Meditation and Relaxation & Guided Imagery playlists on Soundcloud - <https://soundcloud.com/phsabc> using your mobile device or computer. Or download the free Soundcloud app and search BC Cancer tracks.

You may find this helpful, especially if you are feeling confused as to which muscle group to start with and in what order.

Tense and release muscle groups:

- Forehead - wrinkle forehead into frown, tense, release, rest, and/or raise eyebrows
- Eyes – Close eyes tightly, hold and release
- Mouth - press lips tightly together
- Jaw - open mouth wide and stick out tongue
- Neck and shoulders
- Chest
- Abdomen
- Upper right arm - Bend arms at elbows and flex biceps
- Right forearms and hands - Extend arm, elbows locked, and bend hand back at the wrist
- Hands – Clench and unclench fists
- Buttocks - tense
- Thighs
- Back – arch back
- Lower legs
- Feet – point toes and curl them under