

Levator Scapula Stretch by Brad L. Surette, BA, RMT

The levator scapula is a neck and shoulder muscle that seems to be causing problems for many clients and therapists alike.

There are two levator scapula muscles, one on either side of the neck.

When both levator scapula are working properly, they allow you to shrug your shoulders, lifting the shoulder blades up toward the ears. The levator scapula also plays a role in bending the neck, rotating the neck, and tilting the neck back.

For many of us, stress and poor posture force the levator scapula to work almost continuously and therefore these muscles can become rather fatigued and sore.

Have you ever woken up and said "I have a kink in my neck"?

Neck and shoulder pain can be caused by something as simple as sleeping the wrong way.

Sleeping without proper neck support or sleeping on your stomach can aggravate the condition further. So, what can you do to counteract the effects of stress, poor posture, and sleeping habits?

Relaxing the levator scapula muscle will allow the shoulders to rest easily and may also reduce this muscle soreness.

Following your massage therapy treatment apply a heating pad or hot water bottle to the affected area for a maximum of twenty minutes. Remove the heat source and then perform the following stretch preferably up to three times per day.

To stretch the levator scapula, put your right hand behind your back as if you're getting handcuffed, then look down toward your left foot while pulling your head in that same direction with the left hand.



You'll feel a stretch along the right side of the back of your neck. Hold the stretch for thirty seconds and then gently release. Repeat on the opposite side to stretch the left levator scapula. - Brad L. Surette, BA, RMT