

## **Deep breathing important to warmup**

By Ann Smith

No matter what type of workout you intend to do, a good warmup is essential. For a senior intending to do stretches and calisthenics in the home, try the following.

To get the most value out of an exercise session, turn on some melodic music, put yourself in a comfortable stance with feet slightly apart, arms limp and dangling at your sides. In that relaxed position you'll slowly warm up the entire inner and outer muscle network, starting with the head and working slowly down to the feet

Drop the head forward. Inhale deeply, and slowly lift the head upward and drop it to the back as you exhale; lift the head with a deep inhale, stretching upward through the neck; exhale and drop the head forward to the chest. Do this four times, slowly, with a full exhale.

Then do the same thing from side to side, exhaling as the head drops toward the shoulder, inhaling deeply as you stretch the neck upward and over to the other side as you exhale.

Finish this slow head/neck warmup with controlled breathing, rolling your head in a circle (front, side, back, other side, and return to the front.) It's possible that you'll notice some crackling noises in the head/neck areas as you do this, but that's good. It means that you're loosening up some "kinks" in your neck.

I thought I was the only one starting an exercise routine this way until I spent a week in Iceland doing guest classes. At the rehab centre where I was invited to observe, the exercise instructor was starting his class the same way with his mixed group of stroke, heart/lung and multiple sclerosis patients. We both felt strongly that the body should be relaxed before exercise.

*Ann Smith remains in high demand as a speaker in her eighties. Her videos including Stretch Exercise with Ann Smith (also marketed as Stretching for Seniors) in 1997, Moving to Mozart (1999), Rise and Shine (2001) and Inhale,*

*Exhale, Stretch and Move (2006). Visit [www.annsmithvideos.com](http://www.annsmithvideos.com) for more information.*

*This article originally appeared in the February 2010 issue of Forever Young Newspaper*