



# Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

When you have anxiety or stress in your life, or chronic pain, one of the ways your body responds is with muscle tension. **PMR** is a method that helps you relieve that tension. It can also help you to relax at night when trying to fall asleep

When your body is **physically relaxed**, you cannot feel anxious. Practicing PMR for a few weeks will help you get better at this skill. In time you will be able to use this method to relieve stress and to help you relax.



## How do you do it?



Choose a quiet place where you can be comfortable and set aside 15-20 minutes.



At the beginning it may help to use a recording until you learn all the muscle groups in order.



You'll squeeze your muscle groups 1 at a time from your head to toes. See back page for list.



Focusing on first muscle group, take a slow, deep breath in and tense (squeeze) the muscle group, holding it for 5-10 seconds before breathing out as you relax the muscle.



Relax for 10-20 seconds before moving on to the next muscle group

Take a few seconds to focus on the difference between the tensed and the relaxed muscle.

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## Muscle Groups

*Be careful not to tense your muscles too hard. You should not feel any pain or cramping while completing this exercise. Check-in with physician or physical therapist if you have any injuries that could make this difficult.*

*If you don't notice any difference when relaxing a muscle group, try it again; continue to squeeze/tighten while you inhale for 5-10 seconds, and then try to breathe out slowly and fully for another 5-10 seconds "through" the muscles as you relax each set as listed below.*

*Relax for 10-20 seconds before moving on to the next muscle group.*

<b>Muscle group</b>	<b>What to do</b>
Forehead	Raise eyebrows to wrinkle forehead into a deep frown.
Eyes	Close eyes as tightly as you can. Remove contact lenses if needed.
Cheeks	Smile as widely as you can.
Jaw	Tense jaw muscles.
Around the mouth	Press your lips together tightly. Check your face for tension. Just use your lips.
Back of the neck	Press the back of your head against the floor or chair.
Front of the neck	Touch your chin to your chest. Try not to create tension in your neck and head.
Shoulders	Shrug them - raise toward your ears.
Back	Arch your back up and away from the floor or chair.
Chest	Take a deep breath, and hold it for 4 to 10 seconds.
Biceps and upper arms	Bend your arms at the elbows, and flex your biceps.
Wrists and forearms	Extend them, and bend your hands back at the wrist.
Hands	Make fists and squeeze tightly.
Stomach	Suck it into a tight knot. Check your chest and stomach for tension.
Hips and buttocks	Squeeze buttocks together tightly.
Thighs	Clench them hard.
Calves	Curl toes up towards ceiling to be able to tighten calves.
Ankle, toes	Point toes and try to curl them downwards at same time.