

A VASCULITIS EXERCISE PROGRAM

Part 1:
FLEXIBILITY
with Brandon Hudgins





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WHY IS FLEXIBILITY IMPORTANT TO VASCULITIS PATIENTS?

Vasculitis is a disease of inflammation that can rob us of our movement and vitality. The inflammation from the disease, paired with the treatments that are required to manage the disease, can stop people in their tracks. Many patients are bed ridden or have zero energy to exercise or move at their pre-diagnosis pace. Movement is health. If you don't use it, you will lose it. Being sedentary/inactive can also compound many physical issues that can make managing vasculitis even worse. Flexibility routines can help patients increase their quality of life by giving the gift of movement.

SCIENCE SAYS INCORPORATING A REGULAR FLEXIBILITY ROUTINE INTO YOUR DAILY SCHEDULE CAN:

- Correct muscle imbalances
- Increase range of motion
- Improve posture
- Decrease risk of injury
- Decrease muscle stiffness
- Improve your ability to complete daily activities
- Help reduce or manage stress

STRETCHING • LEVEL 1

Level 1 exercises are suitable for patients:

- ✓ with active disease.
- ✓ without prior exercise experience.
- ✓ who have exercise/movement limitations.

You will need:

- ✓ a sturdy chair.
- ✓ a towel, stick, or exercise band.
- ✓ 2-3 feet of clear space on either side of the chair.

All stretches are from a seated position.

LET'S GET
STARTED!



THE EXERCISES

Let's do some deep breathing!

1. Start seated with good posture.
2. Sit tall with feet on floor, face straight ahead, back off of chair, chin forward.
3. Take a deep breath in, count to 3, exhale.



Overhead Reach

1. Take a deep breath in, reach arms toward ceiling.
2. Count to 3.
3. Exhale.
4. Bring arms back down.



Neck Circles

1. Start with head facing forward.
2. Very slowly turn head to the right, reach end of motion, tuck chin.
3. Circle the head around to the left shoulder, return to center.
4. Repeat for the left side.



Upper Back Stretch

1. In seated position, tuck chin, big round arms
2. Round shoulders and upper back forward.
3. Bend forward, deep inhale, count to 3, exhale.
4. return to starting position.



Shoulder/Back Stretch

1. Reach right arm across body.
2. Place left hand on elbow.
3. Pull left hand into chest.
4. Take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale.
5. Repeat for the left arm.



Towel Stretch

1. Hold towel directly in front at shoulder height.
2. Slowly move hands in front of face and pass overhead, reach stopping point.
3. Take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale.
4. Return to starting position.



Chest Stretch

1. Reach arms straight out to the side at chest height, palms forward.
2. Take a deep breath.
3. Move hands back, focus on pulling shoulder blades together, count to 3, exhale, return to start.



Side Stretch

1. Start with shoulders in line with ears, hands by side.
2. Take a deep breath.
3. Take right hand down towards floor, find end range of motion, count to 3, exhale, return to start.
4. Repeat for the left hand.



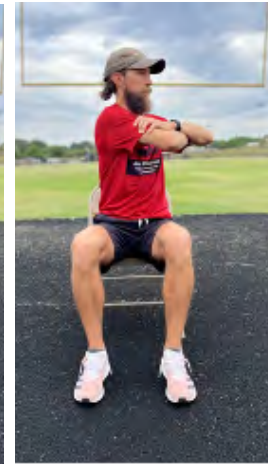
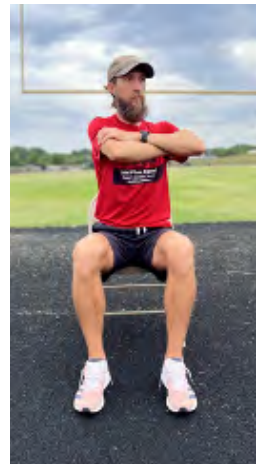
Overhead Side Stretch

1. Raise right hand.
2. Reach right hand (palm forward) towards ceiling.
3. Reach hand across body, take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale, return to start.
4. Repeat with the left hand.



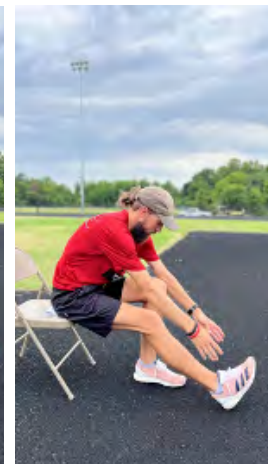
Spine Twist

1. Cross arms at chest height.
2. Keep lower body still as you rotate toward the left, keeping head centered with arms.
3. Take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale, return to center.
4. Repeat for the right side.



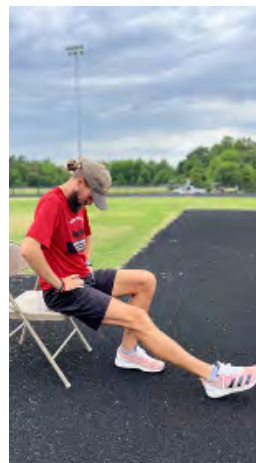
Hamstring Stretch

1. Move forward in seat or chair.
2. Extend right leg until knee is only slightly bent (don't straighten leg).
3. Pull toe towards shin, reach down with both arms, take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale, sit up, pull in leg.
4. Repeat for the left leg.



Nerve Glide

1. Move forward in seat.
2. Extend right leg (don't lock knee).
3. Pull toe towards shin, then point toe towards floor while you tuck your chin, repeat 10 times.
4. Repeat with the left leg.



Shoulder Shrugs

1. Start with hands down to the side in line with shoulders and ears.
2. Pull your shoulders up towards your ears, take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale, return shoulders to neutral.
3. Repeat 2 more times.



Seated Breathing

1. Take 10 steady slow breaths.
2. Count to 3 on the inhale, count to 3 on the exhale.



YOUR PROGRESSION PLAN

Week 1: 1 set, 3 times per week, 3-sec holds

Week 2: 1 set, 3 times per week, 5-sec holds

Week 3: 2 sets, 3 times per week, 5-sec holds

Week 4: 2 sets, 4 times per week, 6-sec holds

Week 5: 2 sets, 4 times per week, 8-sec holds

Week 6: 2 sets, 5 times per week, 8-sec holds

Week 7: 2 sets, 5 times per week, 10-sec holds

Week 8: 2 sets, 5 times per week, 12-sec holds



If you don't feel like you are ready to move on to Level 2 you can continue to add 5 seconds to the holds—up to 30 seconds each exercise.

STRETCHING • LEVEL 2

Level 2 exercises are suitable for patients:

- ✓ with active/inactive disease.
- ✓ with prior exercise experience.
- ✓ that have little or no exercise experience, or have completed Level 1 Flexibility progression and are ready to move to Level 2.

You will need:

- ✓ a clear area with at least 3-4 feet on each side of you to perform movements.
- ✓ ideally, a soft mat or soft surface to stretch on.
- ✓ a chair, railing, or stable surface to use for balance.

This sequence is a combination of standing and seated stretches.

THE EXERCISES

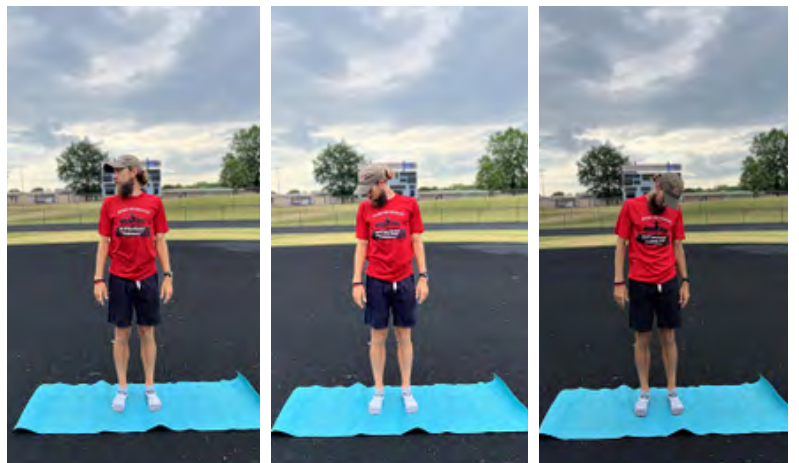
Standing Reach & Breathe

1. Start standing tall (eyes forward, chest up, shoulders relaxed).
2. Reach arms up straight overhead.
3. Take a deep breath, reach further count to 5, exhale, bring arms back down to side.



Standing Neck Circles

1. Start with chin facing forward.
2. Slowly turn chin towards right shoulder, tuck chin, continue to slowly rotate towards left shoulder.
3. Return to starting position.
4. Repeat for the left side.



Standing lat stretch

1. Using a chair, countertop, or any surface of a similar height, place both hands on the surface, feet arms-length away from balance surface, bend/hinge at the waist.
2. Press chest down toward the ground, don't arch back.
3. Deep breath, count to 3, exhale, stand up slowly.



Standing Trunk Twist

1. Standing tall, raise arms straight out beside you.
2. Keep lower body still as you rotate toward the left, keeping head centered with arms.
3. Take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale, return to center.
4. Repeat for the right side.



Standing Inner Thigh Stretch

1. Spread feet wider than shoulder width, toes facing straight ahead.
2. Lunge to the right side by bending the knee and sitting back into hip. Keep left leg straight.
3. Take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale, and stand back up to the starting position.
4. Repeat for the left side.



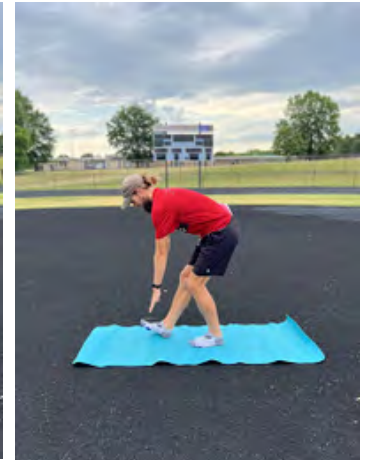
Seated Inner Thigh Stretch

1. In a chair with the right leg bent and the left leg straight out to the side, shift your weight toward the right leg.
2. Take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale, return to the starting position.
3. Repeat for the left side.



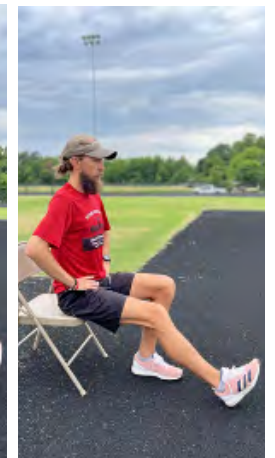
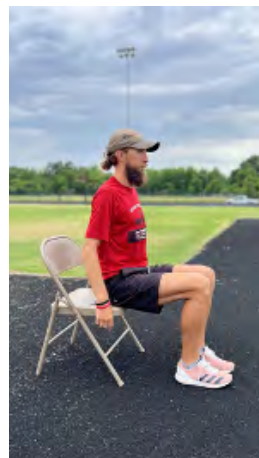
Standing Hamstring Stretch

1. Step out about 4-6 inches with the right leg. With your toes up, keep that leg straight. Reach down towards toes.
2. Take a deep breath, hold for 3 count, exhale, return to starting position slowly.
3. Repeat for the left leg.



Seated Hamstring Stretch

1. Move forward in seat, extend right leg, pull toe towards shin.
2. Reach down with both arms, take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale, sit up, pull in leg.
3. Repeat for the left leg.



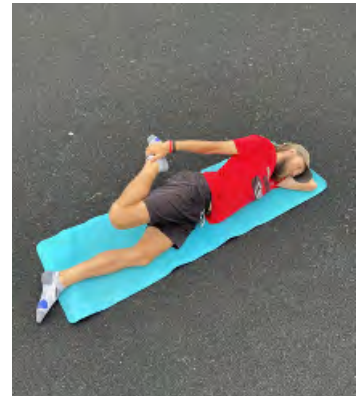
Standing Quad Stretch

1. Hold onto a chair, wall, or counter top.
2. Bend right knee and grab the foot behind you with right hand.
3. Pull your foot up and back, take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale. Place foot back on the ground.
4. Repeat for the left leg.



Lying Quad Stretch

1. Lie down on your left side, feet straight out, support neck with arm.
2. Bend the right leg behind, grab right foot with right hand and pull thigh back, deep breath, count to 3, exhale, return foot to neutral.
3. Roll over on the other side and repeat for the left leg.



If this stretch is too intense, put a towel or band around your foot and gently pull up toward your buttocks (glutes) to allow your knee to bend as far as you can to feel a comfortable stretch.

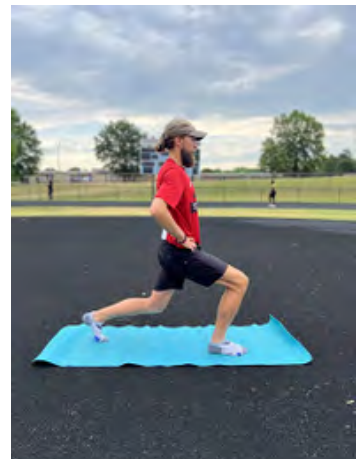
Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch

1. Kneel, placing right knee directly underneath the hip. Bend the left leg 90-degrees with the foot flat on the ground.
2. Squeeze the glutes and move hips forward, take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale.
3. Repeat for the other side.



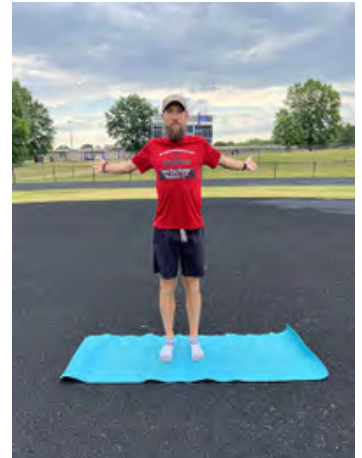
Standing Hip Flexor Stretch

1. Step right foot straight back, bend back leg, make sure both feet are facing forward.
2. Take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale.
3. Return both feet to neutral.
4. Repeat for the left side.



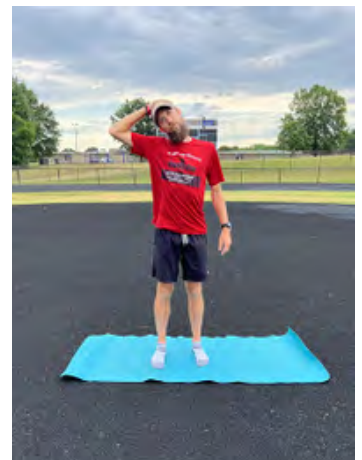
Standing Chest Stretch

1. Stand tall, arms straight out, palms forward.
2. Take a deep breath, move hands back, focus on pulling shoulder blades together.
3. Count to 3, exhale, return to start.



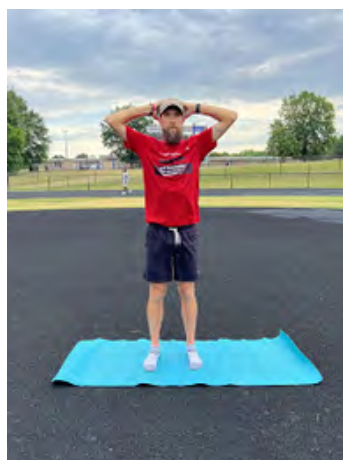
Levator Shoulder Blade Stretch

1. Stand or sit tall, shoulders down and pulled back, ears in line with shoulders, right hand on top of head with nose and elbow in line.
2. Gently pull head down towards right armpit, take a deep breath, count to 3, exhale, return to starting position.
3. Repeat for left side.



Traps Stretch

1. Sit or stand tall, shoulders down and pulled back, ears in line with shoulders.
2. Place right hand on top of head, gently pull towards shoulder, deep breath, count to 3, exhale, return to starting position.
3. Repeat with the left arm.



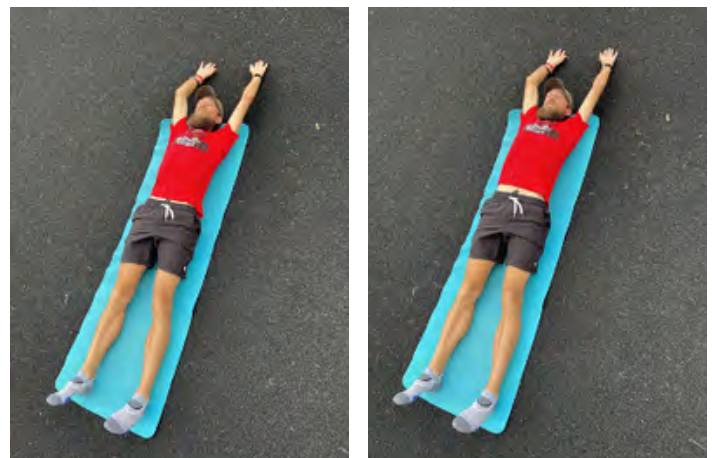
Thoracic Spine Stretch

1. On all fours, tighten the abs, place right hand behind head, exhale.
2. Reach the elbow of the bent arm toward the opposite armpit. Inhale and bring the elbow up toward the sky.
3. Instead of holding this stretch, do 5-8 slow repetitions of rotating down & up before switching sides.



Deep breathing

1. Lying down on back, reach both hands over head.
2. Inhale to a 3-count, hold breath for a 3-count, exhale to a 3-count.
3. Repeat 10 times.



YOUR PROGRESSION PLAN

Week 1: 1 set, 3 times per week, 3-sec holds

Week 2: 2 sets, 3 times per week, 3-sec holds

Week 3: 2 sets, 3 times per week, 5-sec holds

Week 4: 2 sets, 4 times per week, 5-sec holds

Week 5: 2 sets, 4 times per week, 8-sec holds

Week 6: 2 sets, 5 times per week, 8-sec holds

Week 7: 2 sets, 5 times per week, 10-sec holds

Week 8: 2 sets, 5 times per week, 15-sec holds



If you don't feel like you are ready to move on to Level 3 you can continue to add 5 seconds to the holds—up to 30 seconds each exercise.

STRETCHING • LEVEL 3

Level 3 exercises are suitable for:

- ✓ patients in remission.
- ✓ patients with no activity restrictions.
- ✓ patients who have completed Levels 1 & 2 and feel strong enough to move to Level 3.

You will need:

- ✓ a clear area with at least 3-4 feet on each side of you to perform movements.
- ✓ ideally a soft mat or soft surface to stretch on.
- ✓ chair, railing, or stable surface to use for balance.

This routine is a combination of lying and kneeling stretches that require a lot of movement to get into each pose.

THE EXERCISES

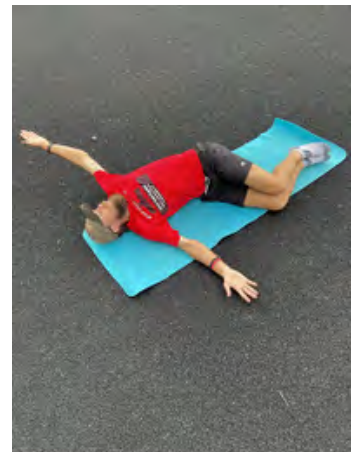
Deep Breathing

1. Lying flat on your back, reach arms up overhead.
2. Take a deep breath, reach further, count to 5, exhale, bring arms back down to side.
3. Repeat twice.



Open Book Torso Twist

1. Lying on the right side, with knees tucked at 90 degrees, place hands together and straight out in front of chest.
2. Open left arm up and across body, rotating upper body while keeping both knees together and against the ground.
3. Continue to stretch your left arm out to the side and look towards your left hand.
4. Take a deep breath, hold for 5 seconds, exhale, return to starting position.
5. Repeat lying on the left side.



Child's Pose (hands out)

1. Start on hands and knees, spread knees wider than hips, bring big toes to touch, sit on heels, sit up straight to lengthen the spine.
2. Slowly bend forward, bringing chest toward thighs, while reaching hands out directly in front.
3. Bring forehead to the floor, take a deep breath, count to 5, exhale.
4. Return to start position.



Pigeon

1. Start on all-fours, bring right knee forward, place right shin in front of body and behind right wrist, place right ankle in front of the left hip.
2. Slide left leg straight back until knee is straight, keep hips square.
3. Gently lower body down into right hip, continue to lower leg until it reaches the ground or end of range of motion, deep breath, count to 5, exhale.
4. Return to starting position on all-fours and repeat for left knee forward.



Downward Dog

1. Begin on hands and knees with shoulders directly above the hands and hips directly above the knees.
2. Spread fingers wide, dig toes into the ground, slowly lift knees off the floor and raise hips to the sky.
3. Gently straighten legs without locking the knees. Press away from the floor to lengthen the spine, press your arm bones straight, relax chin, deep breath, count to 5, exhale.
4. Slowly return to starting position on all-fours.



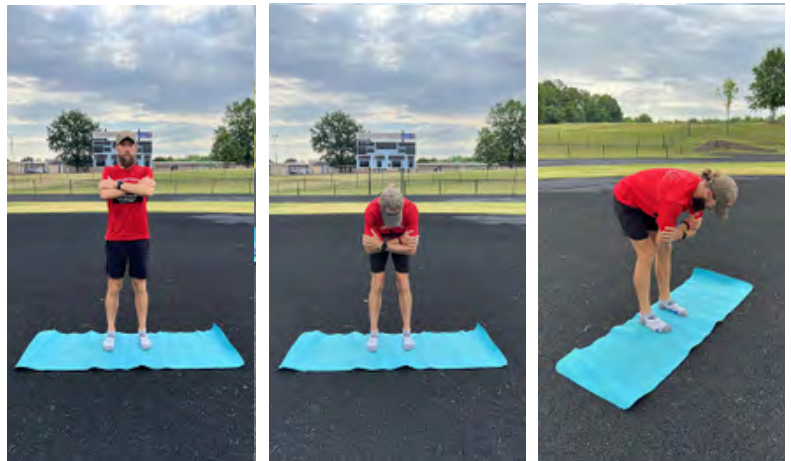
Cat/Cow

1. Start on all-fours, shoulders over hands, hips directly over knees, shins flat on the ground.
2. Inhale, drop belly towards floor, slowly lift chin and shoulders up, broaden shoulders, count to 5.
3. Exhale, draw belly towards spine, slowly round back towards ceiling, bring chin towards chest, count to 5, return to starting position.
4. Repeat this cycle 5 times.



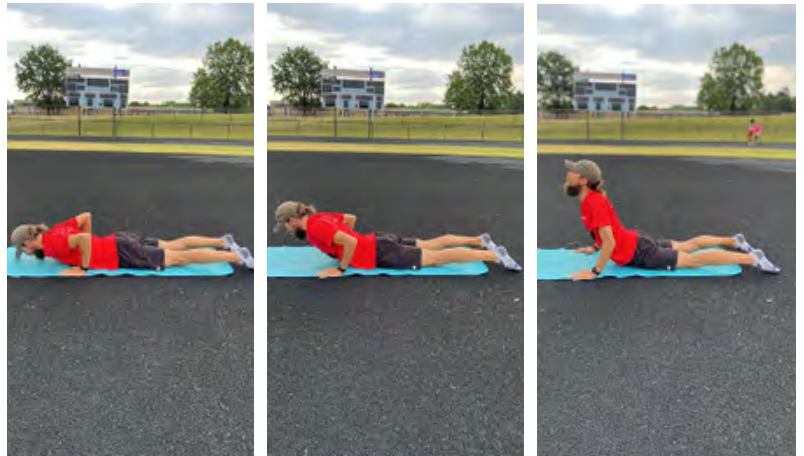
Forward Bend

1. Stand feet shoulder-width apart, cross forearms, hold elbows, exhale.
2. Slowly bend forward at the hips (not from waist), lead with the chest, keep knees slightly bent.
3. Continue to bend forward and bring chest towards thighs, count to 5, inhale, stand up slowly and return to starting position.



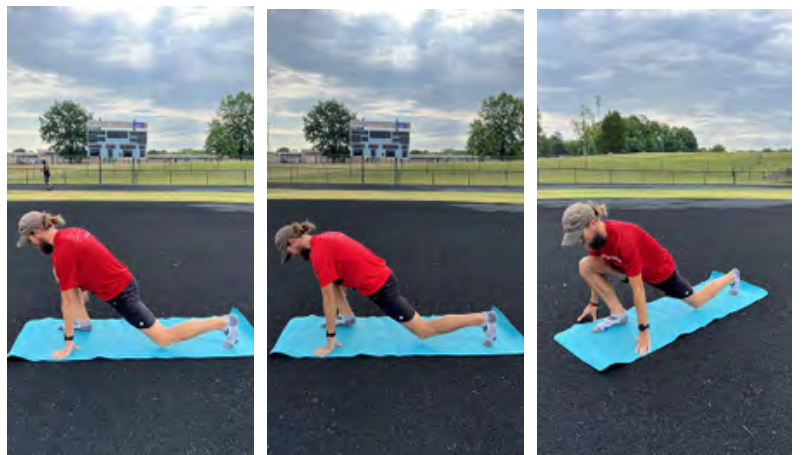
Cobra

1. Lie face-down on the floor with legs extended, rest the tops of feet on the floor, place hands under armpits with fingers pointing forward, keep elbows at the sides of the body.
2. Inhale slowly, press down through the tops of feet and pubic bone, gently lifting head and chest off the floor, at the end of range of motion, count to 5, exhale, Return to starting position on the floor.
3. Repeat 5 times.



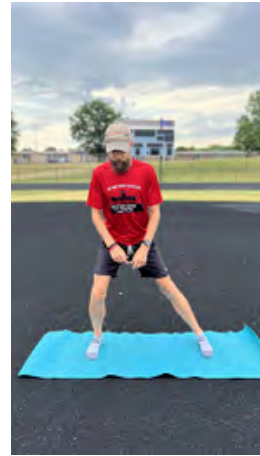
Runner's lunge

1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart and hands by sides.
2. Step forward with right leg and bend right knee (90 degrees) to drop hips, descend until the left knee is close to the floor and front knee is directly above the ankle.
3. Tilt pelvis forward and squeeze the glutes together, deep breath, count to 5, exhale, return to starting position.
4. Repeat with left leg forward.



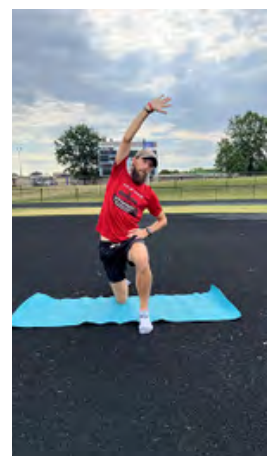
Side Lunge

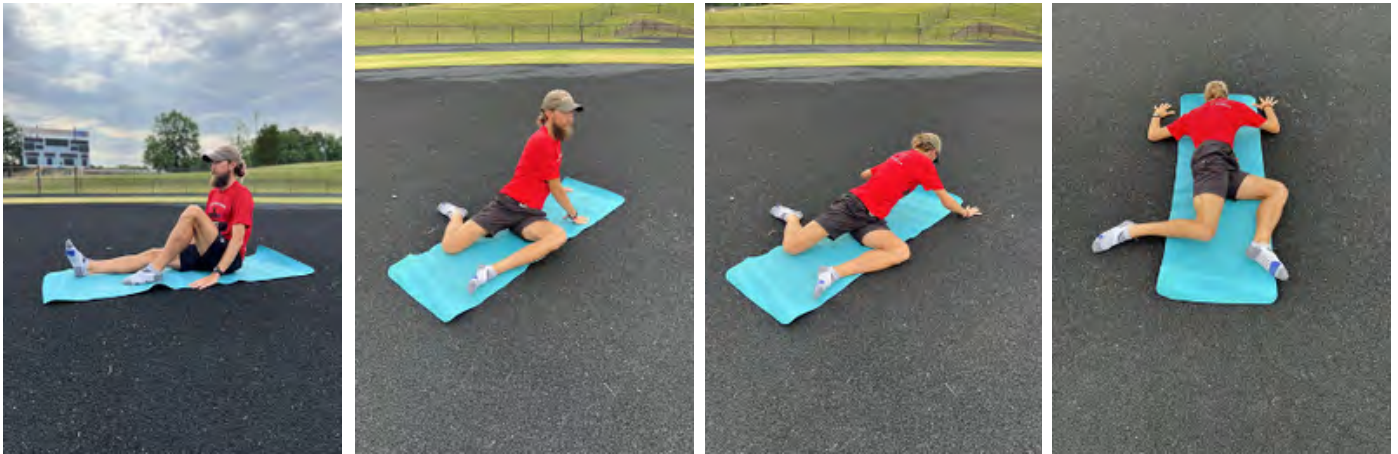
1. With feet wider than shoulder-width apart, toes facing straight ahead, lunge to the right side by bending the knee and sitting back into hip, keep left leg straight.
2. Take a deep breath, count to 5, exhale, stand back up to starting position.
3. Repeat for the left side.



Kneeling Hip Flexor Reach Across

1. Place right knee directly underneath the hip and the left leg bent at 90 degrees with the foot flat on the ground.
2. Squeeze the glutes on the right side and tuck the hips under, reach right hand straight up beside ear and slowly bring it across the midline, deep breath, count to 3, exhale.
3. Repeat for the other side.





Dead Man's Stretch

1. Sitting straight up with feet out in front, bend left side up, turn upper body across left knee, tuck right leg at 90 degrees.
2. Put hands down on ground and continue to twist around bring chest to floor, make touchdown sign with arms, try to bring right chest to floor and right knee to floor.
3. Take a deep breath, hold for 5 count, exhale, return to starting position.
4. Repeat for the right side.

Deep Breathing

1. Lying flat on your back, reach arms up overhead.
2. Take a deep breath, reach further, count to 5, exhale, bring arms back down to side.
3. Repeat twice.



YOUR PROGRESSION PLAN

Week 1: 1 set, 3 times per week, 5-sec holds

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Week 3: 2 sets, 3 times per week, 8-sec holds

Week 4: 2 sets, 4 times per week, 8-sec holds

Week 5: 2 sets, 4 times per week, 10-sec holds

Week 6: 2 sets, 5 times per week, 10-sec holds

Week 7: 2 sets, 5 times per week, 12-sec holds

Week 8: 2 sets, 5 times per week, 15-sec holds



If you don't feel like you are ready to move on to Level 3 you can continue to add 5 seconds to the holds—up to 30 seconds each exercise.



**Thank you to our sponsor of the Victory
Over Vasculitis Wellness Program that
made this guidebook possible.**

A hand holding a silver compass against a blurred background of a mountain range. A large, orange-to-red gradient oval is overlaid on the compass, containing the lowercase letters 'gsk' in white. The hand is wearing a black watch with a black strap.

gsk

2022

www.vasculitisfoundation.org