

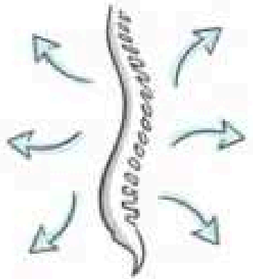
Gentle Yoga for Mobility and Relaxation

Lecture 2 — Mastering the Cat–Cow

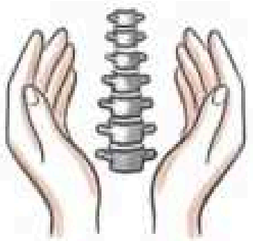
Gemini Notebook

2.1

The Three Questions of This Lecture:



1. How does the spine move?



2. How do we perform Cat-Cow safely?



3. Why is it a perfect back warm-up?

Core Action: 6 to 8 slow repetitions of Cat-Cow.

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2.2 Spine Mechanics

Flexion
(Forward)

Extension
(Backward)



Structure: 24 movable vertebrae + sacrum + tailbone (separated by cushioning discs).

Curves:
Neck & Lower Back (Inward) |
Upper Back (Outward).

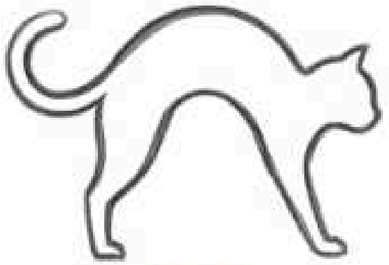
Side-bend

Rotation
(Twist)

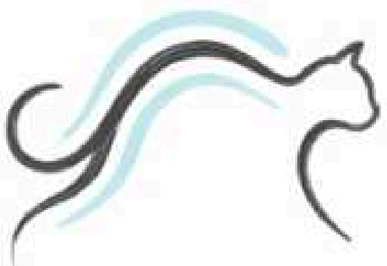
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2.3 Cat-Cow: A Dynamic Stretch for Spinal Health

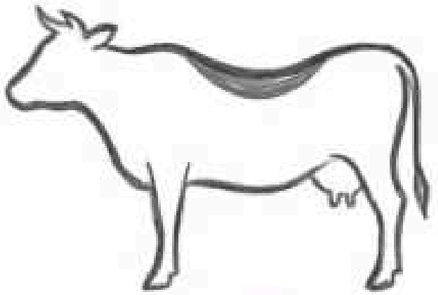
Cat (Marjaryasana)



Arching stretch
(Flexion)



Cow (Bitilasana)



Dipped back
(Extension)



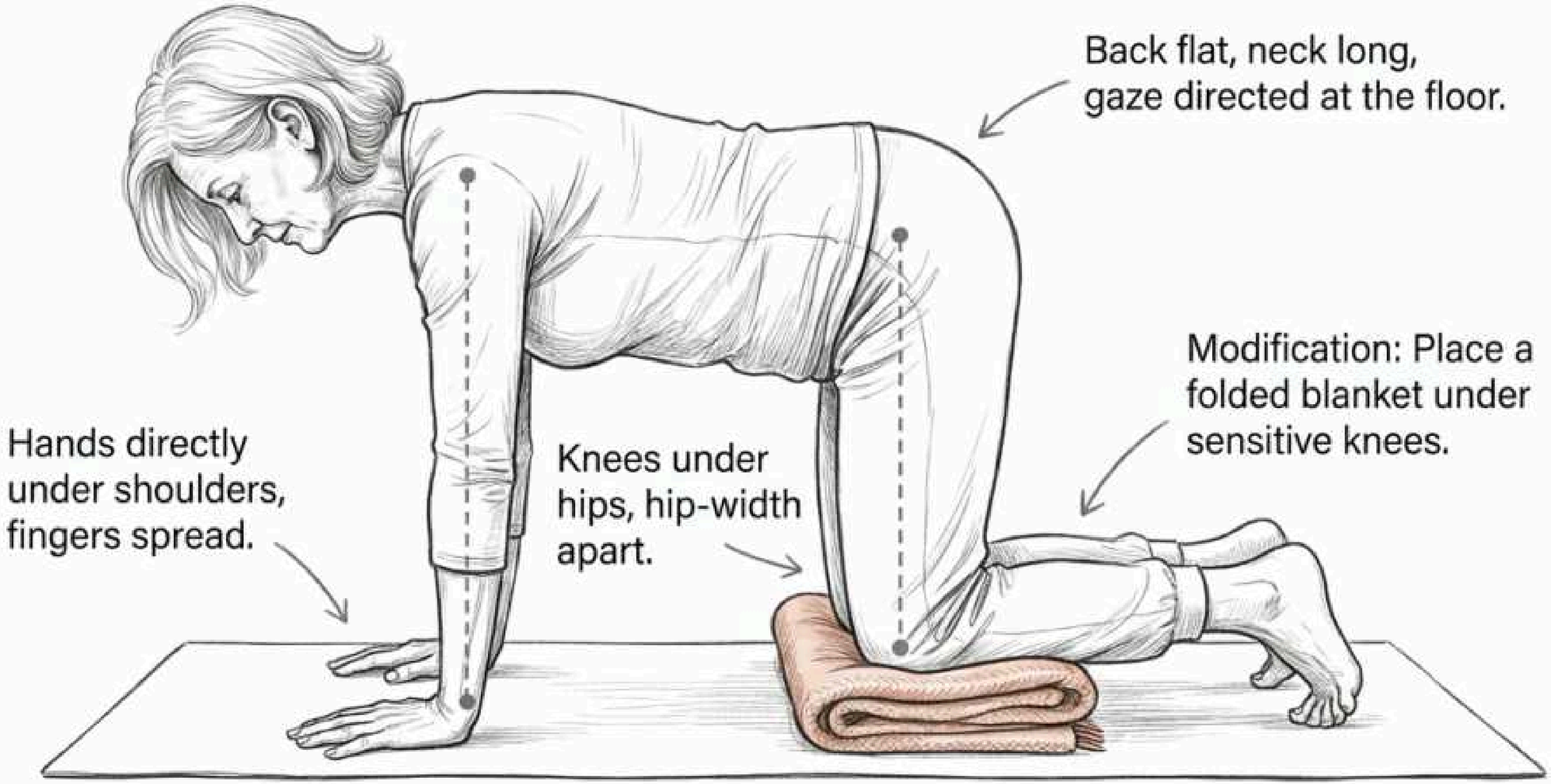


The Benefit: Moving back and forth warms muscles and joints. Gently pumps discs to deliver nourishment through movement.

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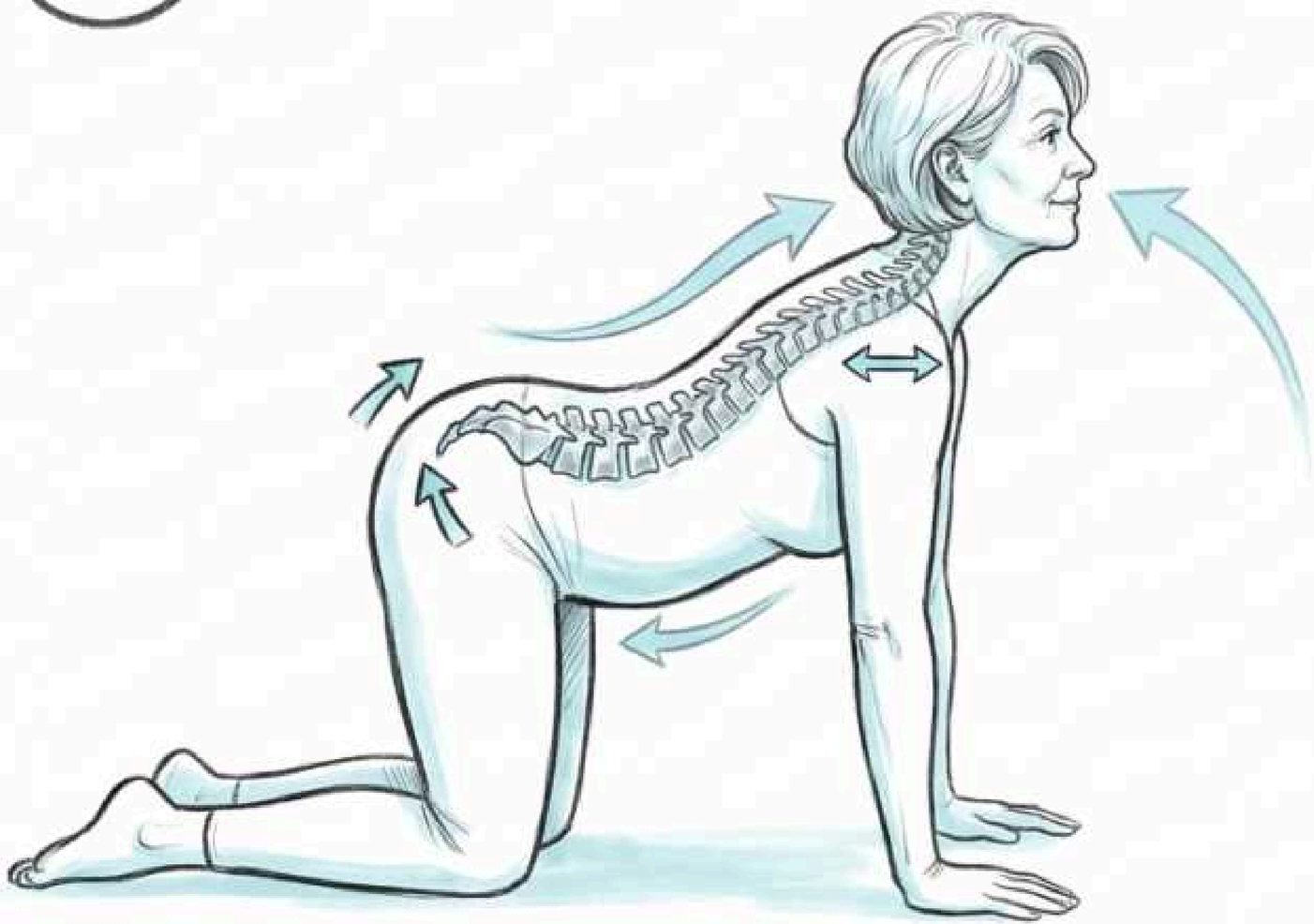
2.4

The Setup: Tabletop Position



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2.5



Breathe In (Cow)

- Belly sinks gently toward the floor.
- Tailbone & sitting bones tip UP.
- Collarbones broaden, gaze lifts slightly (keep neck back long).

Crucial Note: Spread the arch evenly; do not crunch into the lower back.

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2.6

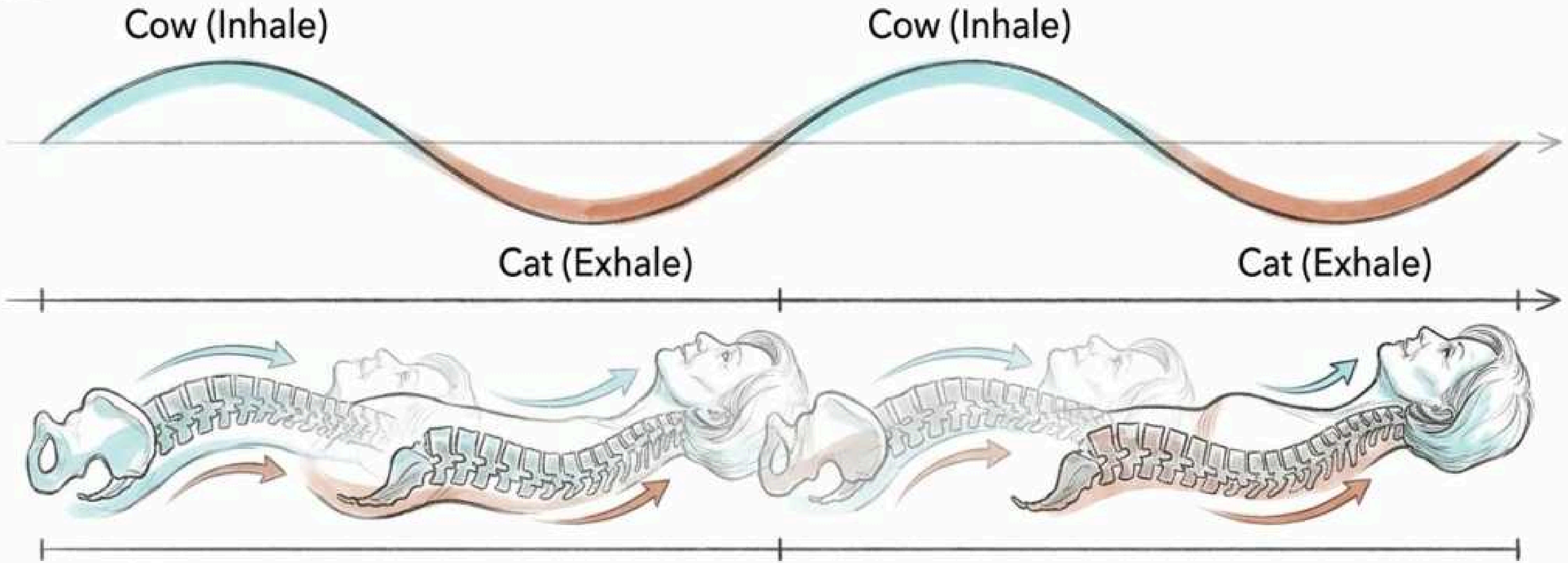
Breathe Out (Cat)



- Press the floor away with your hands.
- Round back toward the ceiling; feel space open between shoulder blades.
- Tuck the tailbone, release head toward the floor.
- Draw belly gently in.

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2.7 The Rhythm of Breath and Motion



Pacing: 1 full breath = 1 complete movement length.

Duration: 6–8 repetitions take about one minute.

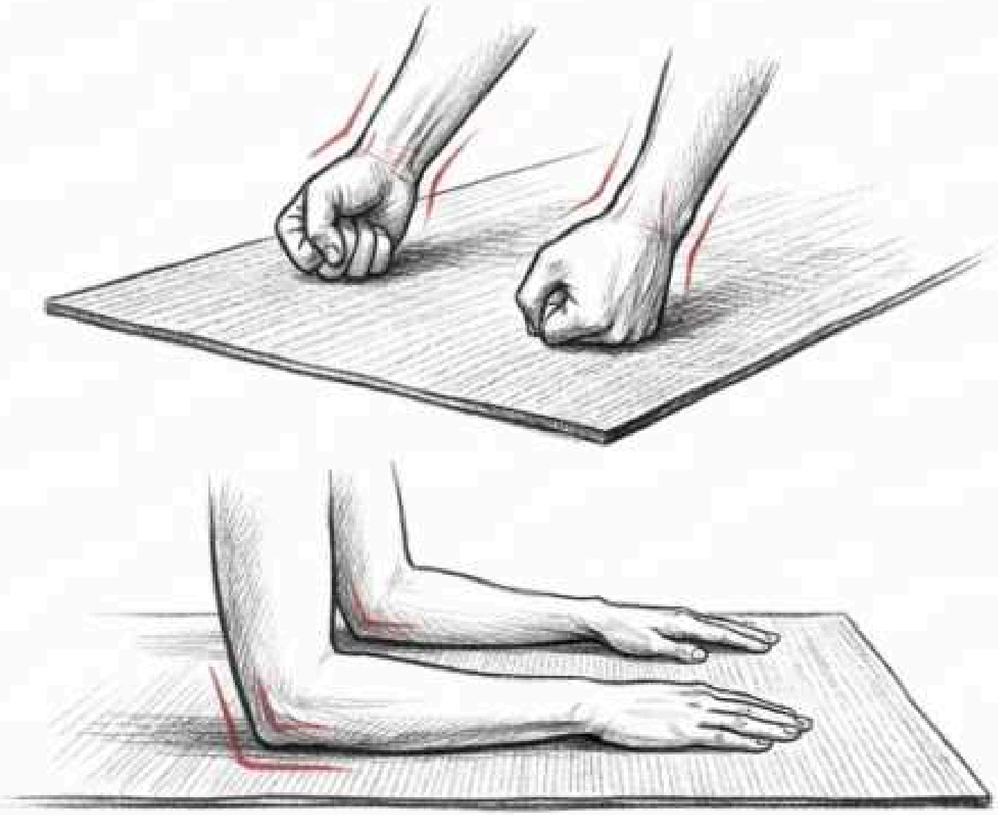
Technique: Start each movement at the pelvis and let it ripple up the spine to the head, one vertebra at a time.

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2.8

Modifications for Comfort

Wrist Pain:



Make fists or rest on your forearms instead of flat hands.

Kneeling Not Possible:



Chair Method:
Hands on knees.
Arch and open chest (Inhale).
Round back and drop chin (Exhale).
The spine movement remains exactly the same.

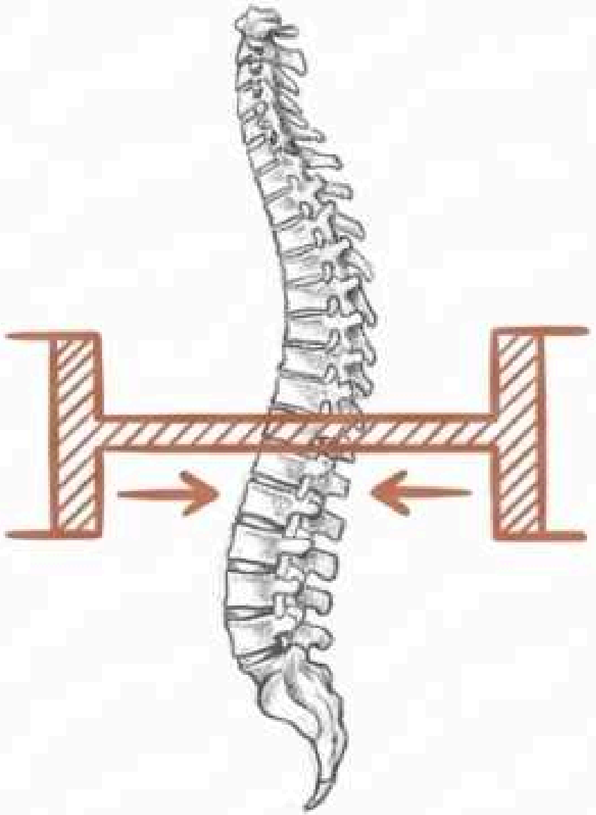
Do the sequence seated in a chair.

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2.9

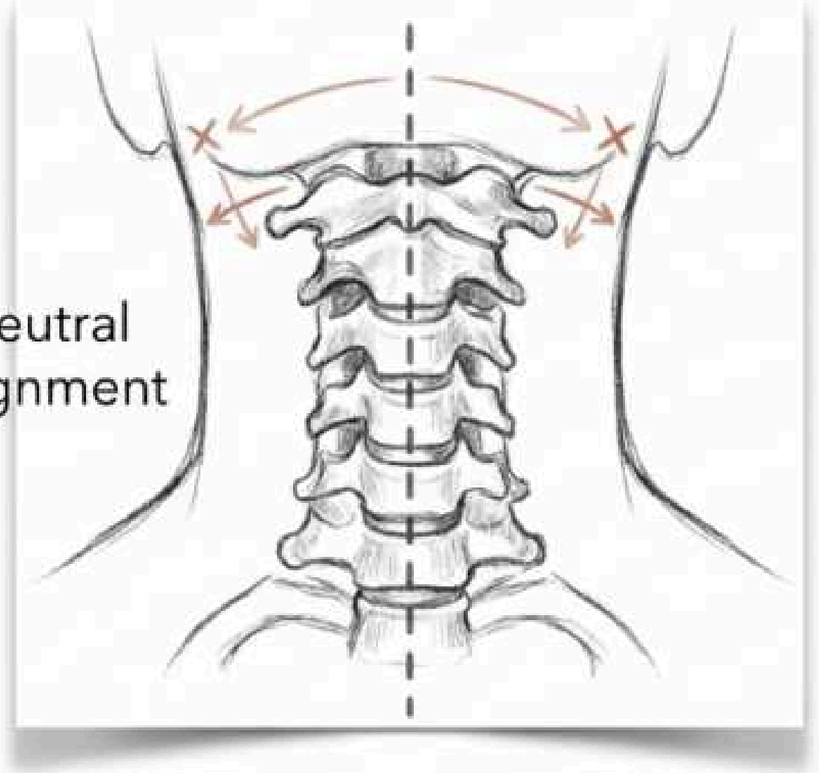
Precautions & Care

Osteoporosis:



Avoid strong, loaded rounding. Keep Cat small and gentle, or emphasize Cow and the flat back instead.

Neck Problems:



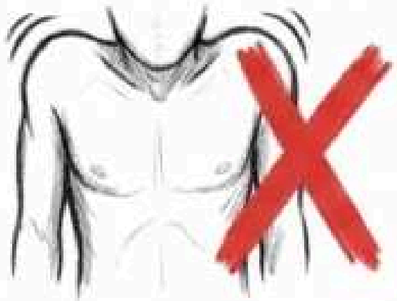
Keep the head in line with the spine rather than lifting or dropping it far.

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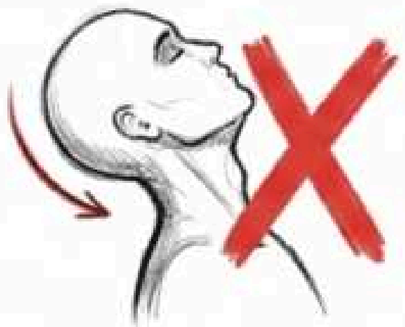
2.10 Mistakes to Avoid:



Rushing the movement.



Collapsing into the shoulders.



Throwing the head far back (causes neck strain).



The Goal: Keep it slow and small enough to feel smooth. It should feel like a pleasant back massage, never a strain.

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2.11

Why is Cat-Cow so popular?



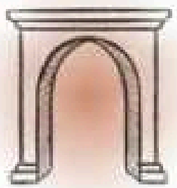
Gentle & Accessible:
Requires absolutely no flexibility to begin.

Comprehensive:
Moves every single part of the spine.





Therapeutic:
Often prescribed by Physical Therapists for stiff backs.

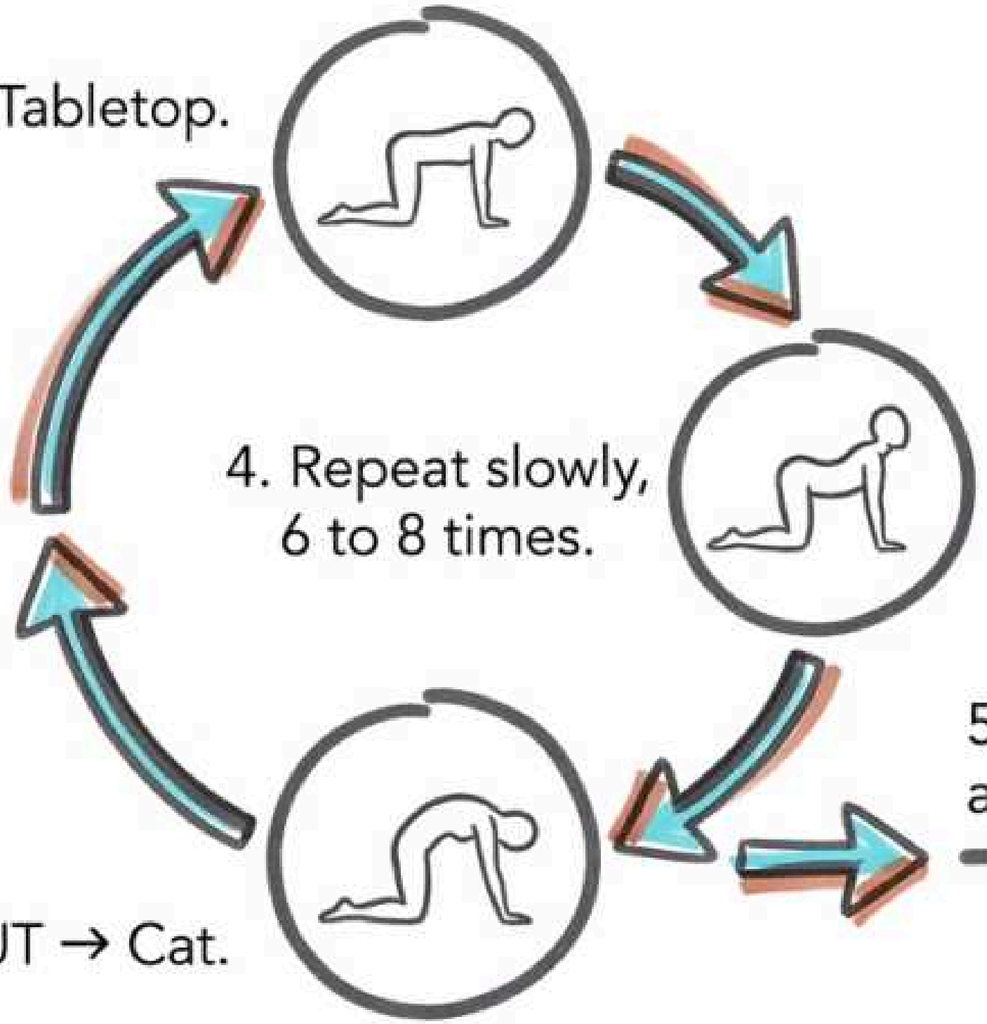


Preparatory: Prime the body for the deeper stretches that follow in a routine.

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2.12

The Practice Protocol



1. Come to Tabletop.

2. Breathe IN → Cow.

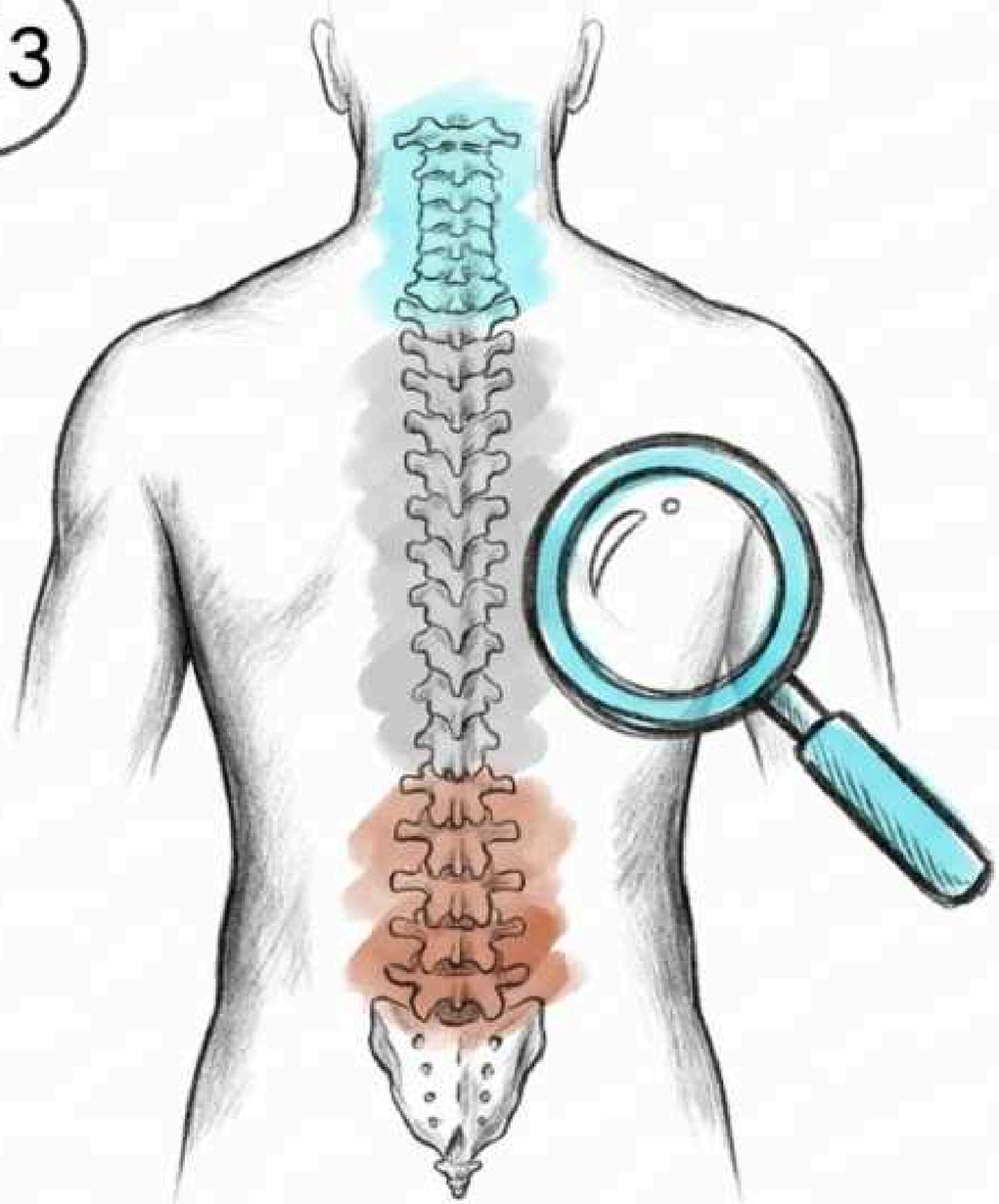
3. Breathe OUT → Cat.

4. Repeat slowly, 6 to 8 times.

5. Return to a flat back and pause for one breath.

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2.13



Closing Exercise: Self-Assessment

Notice your spine during your 6 rounds. Which area moves least easily?

- The Neck?
- The Upper Back?
- The Lower Back?

Your Takeaway: Over the next week, give that specific tight area a little extra gentle attention, always staying within your comfort zone.

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