

The Couch Stretch

Let's start with a bit of history. The couch stretch is an exercise a lot of you have been doing variations of for a long time.

Think about when you played a sport, was doing physical education at school or do the traditional yogi pose in yoga. This is where you grab your foot and pull it to your bum while standing or in a kneeling position (photo on right).



Don't get me wrong, it is great that you are doing a variation of the stretch. There're just a few common problems that you will be experiencing:

- 1 - Difficult to maintain a stable base/position.
- 2 - Bored after 12 seconds, or hard to maintain for longer period of time.
- 3 - These variations do not take you to the end range.

This is important because to **effect change** you need to be able to **mobilise in a good position, hit end-range knee flexion and hip extension** and do it for a **longer period of time**. Studies have shown that a two min mark is determined as a time where actual physiological changes to tissue happens. The couch stretch allows you to accomplish all three of those points, along as you are doing it correctly.

This is why in the modern day the **couch stretch is considered one of the most famous exercises** in the mobility world. People have a real love-hate relationship with it because it is **super effective at improving** the hips and lower back pain, but **also horribly painful at the same time**.

That is why professionals developed a technique of doing in-front of the TV because its a great way to take the mind off the pain and prevents you from passing out.



The photos above are the steps getting into the couch stretch. These are basic physiological ranges of motion, which means **EVERYBODY should be able to get into these positions WITHOUT pain** or restriction.

The most mind blowing thing is that it is **NOT POSSIBLE for the majority of people**. That is why as a Personal Trainer, all my clients will be starting to do this, as their days are constantly sat against a desk making this even harder to achieve.

The main takeaway from this is if you can't get your leg into the setup position or pull your back to the wall, then **SOMETHING IS SERIOUSLY WRONG**. (Your Quads and the front of your hips are freakishly tight).

Method

- Get on your hands and knees, back your feet up the side of the box. Then slide a leg back, driving your knee into the corner and put the shin and foot flush with the side of box
- Squeeze the glute of the leg you put against box to stabilise the lower back. Try and post up with the opposite leg, so the shin is vertical. (if not possible because of too stiff, place a small box in front of you. To help stabilise.
- Drive the hips toward ground and maintain the squeeze of glute. Also pull the tissue slack to end range. (if you get really hot, burning nerve pain. STOP).
- After hanging out for a minute or two, lift torso into upright position. If this is too hard, position a chair, box or sofa in front of you for extra stability.



Common Faults	Alternative Couch Stretch.
Cannot get into the position as too stiff	<p>If you really struggle with the couch stretch. Start with these.</p> <p>Stand on the floor with your leg propped up against the couch and do all the points mentioned above.</p> <p>When that becomes easier, start lifting the leg from the floor to the couch. This creates more tension.</p>
Slide knee to the side	
The knee pulls away from the corner	
Over extended	
Let bum go off tension	
Stop breathing	

Take away points

- Everyone should be able to do the couch stretch with no pain.
- If you cannot it means your quads and hips are freakishly tight.
- Do it for at least two mins on each leg.
- Keep an eye out for common faults.
- After few weeks and a month see and feel the difference in your hips, glutes and lower back pain.