



## Don't Forget to Hang Those Lats Out

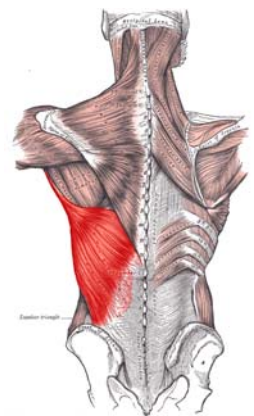
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Have some back pain? Don't forget to hang those Lats out!

Recently I had a discussion with a colleague regarding the idea of stretching related to low back pain and how so much emphasis is often misplaced on stretching the hamstrings and it dawned on me that this would be a perfect topic to bring up in our tips section. Today, I want to talk about the muscle group that I feel should be the most emphasized when focusing on any low back flexibility program and that is your Latissimus dorsi.

Your lats, short for Latissimus dorsi, are a set of muscles on each side of the back that run from the crest of your pelvis all the way up to the humerus bone, the long bone of the upper arm. This muscle covers a significantly large area in terms of your back. Its attachment sites also include the lower thoracic spine, the lower rib cage and the muscular lining of the lumbar region. Thus, it has the ability to create a significant pull throughout your lower back when engaged.

Far too often this muscle is only appreciated when discussing things that affect the shoulder because it helps contribute to shoulder internal rotation. However, if over used and overstressed it also contributes to such postures as an anterior pelvic tilt, lumbar lordosis (increased curve in lower spine), and lateral side bent position if one side is more dominant than the other. All of these conditions can lead to increased extension of the spine and increased pressure through the joints of the spine causing discomfort.



Two stretches that I prefer for these muscles are very simple and can be done at the gym or at home. The first, which is often easier to perform, is to reach out with your hand on the side that you want to stretch and grab and hold a door frame, place that same foot behind the other as if you were doing a lunge. Then proceed to sit back and you should feel a pull down that outside of your back up into the shoulder region. The key is to get a good sit back position. Once in the position perform 5 breaths in the nose and out the mouth. This will help you get some increased abdominal contraction which will accentuate the stretch.



The second stretch is simply hanging from an overhead pull up bar or pull down bar. When performing this exercise reach up and hang from a pull down bar and round out your pelvis by squeezing your glutes together. You should again feel a stretch down the outside of your shoulder in to the lower back. Again, perform 5 breathes and relax.

For both stretches I encourage people to perform 4-5 repetitions. Performing either of these lat stretches will help reduce the tightness you feel in the area of your lower back and reduce the chance of future back problems.