



Seated Twist

The Seated Twist allows you to regain control of the muscles that rotate the spine. The exercise is practiced by sitting up with the knees to one side, and slowly turning the upper body to one side and back. This exercise helps to relieve tightness and pain in the back, neck, and abdominals, disc problems, scoliosis, and pelvic rotation.

EXERCISE DESCRIPTION

Starting Position: Sit down on your carpet or exercise mat. Bend your knees and let your knees drop to the right. Let the sole of your right foot rest against your left thigh. Put your right hand on the floor by your side, with your arm straight. You should be using your right arm just to help balance yourself; you should not be leaning your weight on it.

Movement: Bring your left hand up to rest on your right shoulder. Keep your eyes open for now. Keep your hips where they are – don't let your left hip lift up – and slowly start turning to the right. You'll feel limited because you're not lifting up your left hip. Find a point on the wall to mark your starting point. Now slowly rotate back to the left.

One more time, keeping your hips where they are, slowly turn to the right as far as you can comfortably. Notice if you've gone any farther than you did before. Now slowly rotate back to the left.

This time, you can let your left hip lift up as you turn to the right. Go ahead and gently turn to the right, just as far as is comfortable for you, and find a point to focus on to mark your starting point. Now close your eyes. Slowly and gently rotate back to the left.

Start slowly turning to the right again, and go as far as you can comfortably. When you're ready, slowly rotate back to the left. Slowly turn to the right one more time, as far as you can comfortably. Then you can open your eyes, and see if you've rotated farther than where you started.

Stay here in your fully rotated position. Slowly and gently turn just your head all the way to the left. Then, slowly turn your head back all the way to the right. Do this two more times, very slowly and gently, turning your head all the way to the left and then

all the way to the right. When you're done, slowly and gently rotate your whole body back to the left.

One last time on this side, slowly turn all the way to the right, as far as is comfortable for you. Keep your head exactly where it is, and let just your eyes travel in a straight line all the way to the left, then all the way back to the right. Do this two more times, moving your eyes in a straight line all the way to the left and then all the way back to the right. When you're done, slowly rotate your whole body back to the left.

When you're done, practice this movement on the other side.

ANATOMY OF THE SEATED TWIST

The Seated Twist works with the following muscles that rotate the spine:

- Internal and external obliques
- Multifidi
- Rotatores

The Seated Twist also works with the many muscles that rotate the cervical spine; see *Trail Guide to the Body* for a complete list.

CONDITIONS HELPED BY THE SEATED TWIST

The Seated Twist helps to alleviate the following conditions:

- Back tightness and pain
- Disc problems
- Scoliosis
- Neck tightness and pain
- Tightness in the abdominals
- Pelvic rotation

HOW TO TEACH THE SEATED TWIST

Get the student in their starting position. Instruct your student to sit down on their carpet or exercise mat, bend their knees, and let their knees drop to the right. The sole of their right foot should rest against their left thigh. Instruct them to put their right hand on the floor by their side, with their arm straight. Their arm should provide balance, but should not be supporting much weight.

Teach the rotation of the spine. Instruct your student to bring their left hand up to rest on their right shoulder; this forces the student to twist through their core. Tell your student to keep their left hip on the floor and slowly turn their upper body to the right. When they have turned as far to the right as possible, they should find a point on the wall to remember as their starting point. Then instruct your student to slowly rotate back to the left, to their starting position.

Again, instruct your student to keep their left hip on the floor and slowly turn their upper body to the right, as far as they can comfortably, and notice if they rotated any farther than the first time. Then they can slowly rotate back to the left.

Now, instruct your student to turn to the right again, this time letting their left hip lift up. Tell them to find a point on the wall to remember as their new starting point. Then instruct your student to close their eyes. Tell them to slowly rotate back to the left.

Talk your student through slowly turning all the way to the right, slowly turning back to the left, then slowly turning all the way to the right again, keeping their eyes closed the whole time. When they have turned all the way to the right that last time, they can open their eyes and see if they have turned farther than their starting point.

Teach the turning of the head. Instruct your student to stay there in their fully rotated position. Their eyes may be open or closed. In this position, tell your student to turn just their head all the way to the left. Then, they can turn their head all the way to the right. Talk them through slowly turning their head all the way to the left and back to the right two more times. Then they can slowly turn their whole upper body back to the left, to their starting position.

Teach the eye movement. Tell your student to rotate their upper body all the way to the right again. Instruct your student to keep their head exactly where it is, and just let their eyes travel in a straight line all the way to the left and then all the way back to the right. Talk them through doing this two more times. When they're done, they can slowly turn their whole upper body back to the left, to their starting position.

Talk your student through this movement on the other side: with knees dropped to the left, the sole of their left foot on their right thigh, and their right hand on their left shoulder.

Notes:

If the starting position of this movement is not comfortable for your student's hips, the Washcloth and Steeple Movement are good alternatives. Make sure they are practicing the Internal and External Hip Rotator Releases to address their hip discomfort. The Seated Twist can also be practiced sitting in a chair with a flat seat.

Common mistakes:

The only common mistake or difficulty that students have in this movement is putting too much weight on their supporting hand, and feeling discomfort or pain in the wrist. Remind your students throughout the movement to not put too much weight on their supporting hand.

The following is an example of how I teach the Seated Twist:

Sit down on your carpet or exercise mat. Bend your knees and let your knees drop to the right. Let the sole of your right foot rest against your left thigh. Put your right hand on the floor by your side, with your arm straight. You should be using your right arm just to help balance yourself – you should not be leaning your weight on it. Now, bring your left hand up to rest on your right shoulder.

Keep your eyes open for now. Keep your hips where they are – don't let your left hip lift up – and slowly start turning to the right. You'll feel limited because you're not lifting up your left hip. Find a point on the wall to mark your starting point. Now slowly rotate back to the left.

One more time, keeping your hips where they are, slowly turn to the right as far as you can comfortably. Notice if you've gone any farther than you did before. Now slowly rotate back to the left.

This time, you can let your left hip lift up as you turn to the right. Go ahead and gently turn to the right, just as far as is comfortable for you, and find a point to focus on to mark your starting point. Now, close your eyes, and keep them closed. Slowly and gently rotate back to the left.

Now start slowly turning to the right again, noticing what you feel as you're turning, and go as far as you can comfortably. When you're ready, slowly rotate back to the left. One more time, slowly turn to the right, and go as far as you can comfortably. Then, you can open your eyes, and see if you've rotated farther than where you started.

Stay here in your fully rotated position. Slowly and gently turn just your head all the way to the left. Then, slowly turn your head back all the way to the right. Do this two more times, very slowly and gently, turning your head all the way to the left and then all the way to the right.

When you're done, slowly and gently rotate your whole spine back to the left. One last time on this side, slowly turn all the way to the right, as far as is comfortable for you. Keep your head exactly where it is, and just let your eyes travel in a straight line all the way to the left....then all the way back to the right. Do this two more times, moving your eyes in a straight line all the way to the left and then all the way back to the right. When you're done,

slowly come back to the left to your starting position. Feel free to stretch out your legs and move in any way that you need to before you do the other side.

When you're ready, bend your knees and let your knees drop to the left. Let the sole of your left foot rest against your right thigh. Put your left hand on the floor by your side, with your arm straight. You should be using your left arm just to help balance yourself – you should not be leaning your weight on it. Now, bring your right hand up to rest on your left shoulder.

(Talk your student through the exercise rotating to the left side.)