



## Upper Body Stretching for Hockey

**Tad O’Had, director of hockey operations at BlueStreak Sports Training and co-founder of hybridHockey, says that ignoring flexibility up top can hinder your range of motion.**

**By Scott Mackar**

If handling the puck like Gretzky or Jagr is your ultimate goal, work on your upper-body flexibility. Tad O’Had, director of hockey operations at BlueStreak Sports Training and co-founder of hybridHockey, says that ignoring flexibility up top can hinder your range of motion, which can lead to subpar stick skills.

“No serious, aspiring hockey player can have an inflexible upper body,” O’Had says. “It will have an immediate impact on his range of motion and stick-handling creativity. It will also negatively affect his rotational core strength, reducing the velocity of his wrist, slap and snap shots.”

To improve his athletes’ upper-body flexibility, O’Had incorporates neural confusion movements— performing one type of movement with your upper body while your lower body performs another—because this is how hockey players are often required to move.

O’Had recommends using the following stretches every day, after your pre- and post-game activities. Perform two sets of each stretch, and you’ll be on your way to lighting up the lamp with some heat-seeking pucks.

### **Lying Reach Back**

- Lie face down
- Extend right arm to side
- Roll over onto right side
- Bring left hand behind back, towards right hand
- Hold for 20 seconds; switch to opposite side

### **Standing Rotational Twist**

- Begin in athletic stance with feet shoulder width apart
- Bend down and touch right hand to ground outside left foot
- Reach left arm toward ceiling, pulling shoulder blades together

- Hold for 20 seconds; switch to opposite side

### **Neural Confusion Arm Swings**

- Standing, fully extend arms in front of body
- Rotate right arm forward and left arm backward
- Hold for 30 seconds; switch directions

### **Towel Stretch**

- Standing, hold towel in right hand
- Bring right hand over shoulder and left hand around to lower back
- Walk left hand up towel as far as you can
- Hold for 20 seconds; switch arms

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## **Exercise: Standing Rotational Twist**



- Lie face down
- Extend right arm to side
- Roll over onto right side
- Bring left hand behind back, towards right hand
- Hold for 20 seconds; switch to opposite side

## Exercise: Towel Stretch



- Standing, hold towel in right hand
- Bring right hand over shoulder and left hand around to lower back
- Walk left hand up towel as far as you can
- Hold for 20 seconds; switch arms

## Exercise: Lying Reach Back



- Lie face down
- Extend right arm to side
- Roll over onto right side
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- Hold for 20 seconds; switch to opposite side

## Exercise: Neural Confusion Arm Swings



- Standing, fully extend arms in front of body
- Rotate right arm forward and left arm backward
- Hold for 30 seconds; switch directions