

# Pilates Exercise of the Month: Single Leg Stretch

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**Purpose:** Single Leg Stretch will strengthen the abdominals and the buttocks as well as improve coordination. This is the first of five exercises termed as the Stomach Series.

1. Sit in the center of your mat with your knees bent. Hug your right leg and pull it in to your chest with your inside hand on the knee and your outside hand on the ankle.
2. Roll your back down to the mat, bringing the bent leg (right leg) with you; head and upper shoulders are off the mat. Then, extend your left leg out in front of you; let it hover above the mat at about a 45 degree angle. Your leg does not have to be 45 degrees, but at an angle so your back stays flat on the mat.
3. Inhale, keeping the right leg straight and use your hands to lightly pulse the leg twice. Sink the navel deeper into the mat beneath you as the leg nears the body.
4. With elbows lifted; chin to chest; inhale. Then, exhale and switch legs, bringing the outside hand to the ankle and the inside hand to the knee (left leg). Stretch your right leg long; hovering above the mat at about a 45 degree angle; making sure your leg is in line with the center of your body.

Repeat 8-10 sets. To finish, hug both knees in toward chest, put head and shoulders on mat.

**Goal:** Scoop your belly at all times. Stay lifted (eyes on belly) and slide shoulders down away from your ears. Remain still in your torso- not rocking your body from side to side when switching legs. Squeeze your buttocks each time the leg stretches out. Pay attention to the hand placement as it keeps your leg in proper alignment with your hip.

**Note:** You may rest your head when necessary. If you have a bad knee; hold the underside of the thigh. For a bad back; extend the straight leg to the ceiling. As your lower abdominal strength improves, you can begin to lower the leg.

**Visualization:** Move directly to Double Leg Stretch – which will be previewed in later newsletters.

