

Stretch it out at your desk

ERGONOMICS MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS OFFICE SAFETY



If you work in an office, chances are good that you sit for a large part of the day. This puts you at risk for ergonomics-related problems.

“No matter how well a workstation is designed ... working at a computer often involves very few changes in body position,” states the Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety. “This lack of movement can lead to muscle pain and strain.”

You can help prevent the adverse health effects of sitting by starting a stretching routine. CCOHS describes a number of stretches you can do at your workstation:

Hands and arms:

- Start with your hand open, and then make a fist – keeping your thumb straight. Then, slide your fingertips up your palm so that the tips of your fingers are near the base of your fingers. You should feel a stretch.
- Place your hands down and open. Gently bend your wrist from side to side as far as you can. Hold this stretch for about five seconds. Repeat it three times.

- Stretch out your arm and hand, and slowly rotate your wrist until you feel a stretching sensation. Hold for three to five seconds. Then, rotate your palm up until you feel a stretch. Repeat this sequence three times.
- Place your elbows on your desk with your palms together and slowly lower your wrists for about seven seconds before relaxing. Repeat this stretch three times.

Neck and shoulders:

- Bring the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel some tension. Hold this pose for three to five seconds before relaxing into your normal sitting position. Repeat this stretch two or three times.
- While sitting or standing – without lifting your chin – glide your head straight back. (If you feel like you’re giving yourself a “double chin,” you’re doing this stretch correctly.) Hold for 20 counts and repeat five to 10 times.
- Slowly drop your head to the left, trying to touch your left ear to your shoulder. Hold and then repeat on the right side.
- Placing your hands behind your head, squeeze your shoulder blades together.

Back and legs:

- Lace your fingers together and lift your arms over your head, making sure to keep your elbows straight. Then, press your arms as far back as you can and slowly lean to the left and then to the right.
- Hold your right arm with your left hand just above your elbow, and then gently push your elbow toward your left shoulder. Hold this for five seconds and repeat with your left arm.
- Hold one foot off the floor with your leg straight. Point your toes up and then down. Repeat with your other leg.
- Sit forward in your chair and place your feet flat on the floor. With a straight leg, lift one foot a few inches off the floor. Hold for a moment and return your foot to the floor.