

WORKPLACE ERGONOMICS

# Exercises to Keep You Comfortable at Work

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*Your guide to  
workstation exercises*



# Workstation Exercises

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These simple stretching exercises are designed to keep you comfortable at work. The following general guidelines apply to these workstation exercises:

- Remember to breathe while exercising.
- Always stretch gently. Avoid jerky movements.
- Go easy at first. Start out with a few exercises and gradually increase.
- Exercise regularly. Try to do some of the exercises everyday at regular intervals.

Discontinue the exercise if pain occurs. Pain and discomfort after you have exercised probably means you did too much. Check with a medical professional when in doubt.

These stretching exercises can easily be done at your workstation. Most of them can be done while seated in your chair.



### **1. Deep Breathing**

Deep breathing is a good warm-up. Sit up straight. Place one hand on your stomach. Inhale slowly through your nose, expanding your stomach as the air enters. Hold your breath for 1-2 seconds. Now exhale completely through your mouth.



### **2. Neck**

Start with your head up straight, facing forward. Turn your head slowly to one side as far as comfortable. Then turn to the other side.



### **3. Neck Glide**

Move your head forward keeping your head up straight.



Move your head back, creating a "double chin." You will feel a slight stretch in the back of the neck.



#### **4. Neck and Shoulder Stretch**

Let your head fall gently forward and to one side. Keep the shoulder down on the side where you feel the stretch. Hold this position for five to ten seconds. Return to midline and repeat on the other side.



#### **5. Shoulder**

Slowly move your shoulders in a circular motion: upward, forward, downward, and backward for forward circles. Reverse the direction for backward circles.



#### **6. Chest and Shoulder Stretch**

Bend your elbows with your hands near your shoulders. Breathe in through your nose and as you exhale, lower your elbows down and back. Aim your elbows at your back pockets. Hold this position for a few seconds and then relax. *Variation: keep elbows at shoulder height.*



#### **7. Arms, Shoulders and Rib Cage**

Interlace your fingers and with your palms facing upward above your head, press your hands upward, stretching your arms. Hold for five seconds. *Variation: press hands forward at shoulder level.*



## **8. Lower Back**

Exhaling, lower your head and slowly roll toward your knees. Let your hands drop at your ankles. Hold five seconds. Inhaling, unwind, slowly raising your head and shoulders. Exhaling, stretch your arms toward the ceiling.



## **9. Legs**

Using both hands, grasp one shin. Pull your leg slowly up toward your chest. Hold this position for five seconds. After lowering your leg, repeat with the opposite leg.



## **10. Shoulders, Back and Hip**

Place your palms on your lower back in a standing or sitting position. Leaning your shoulders back, stretch your upper body backwards. Hold this position for five seconds. Return to a neutral position.

## **11. Walking**

The best and easiest activity for a warm-up is to take a short brisk walk. Two or three times around the worksite should do it.



## Hand Exercises

### 1. Hand and Finger

With your arms in a comfortable position, make a fist and hold for two or three seconds. Then stretch your fingers out and hold for two to three seconds.



### 2. Wrist

With your forearm in a comfortable horizontal position and your palm toward the floor, bend your wrist down. Then raise your hand, extending your wrist.



### 3. Wrist Rotation

With your hands in front of you and your elbows at a comfortable angle, bend your wrist down, to the side, back and around to the opposite side, continuing in a gentle rotation of your wrist. Repeat in the opposite direction.



### 4. Thumb

Grasp the thumb of one hand and pull out to the side and down until you feel a slight stretch. Hold for five to ten seconds.

## Eyes

1. With your head steady, slowly move your eyes in all directions: upward and downward, side to side, diagonally.
2. With your head steady, roll your eyes in a circular motion clockwise.



- Reverse the direction and repeat, rolling your eyes counter-clockwise.
3. Every 30 or 40 minutes, locate an object at least 20 feet away and focus on it. Take a minute to allow your eyes to adjust.
  4. Cover one eye with a cupped palm and focus on the palm of your hand. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat this procedure with your other eye.
  5. Close your eyes and cover them with cupped palms. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds.
  6. Blink your eyes often, moistening them. If dry eyes continue, consult with a health care professional about using an eye drop solution.

## Summary

These exercises will be most effective if performed on a routine basis everyday. Various combinations of individual exercises performed at regular intervals throughout the day will require as little as 2 to 3 minutes every hour or two.

These exercises can also be done as a warm-up routine requiring less than 10 minutes. Just as athletes need to warm up before competition, industrial and office workers need to warm up to meet the physical demands of their jobs. Stretching exercises warm up the muscles and improve muscle elasticity.

Develop a pattern of exercising various parts of your body routinely **BEFORE** discomfort occurs and exercise regularly throughout the day...everyday.

Exercise, including those identified in this document, may result in injury. Always consult with your physician or health care professional before beginning any new exercise program or performing any new exercises, particularly if you are pregnant or nursing, elderly, or have any chronic or recurring physical conditions. If you feel faint, dizzy or have physical discomfort at any point during the performance of these exercises, stop immediately and consult a physician.

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