

# BREAK UP YOUR WORK DAY

## Workday Stretching Guide



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According to the American Heart Association, the average American sits for six to eight hours per day. Studies have linked prolonged periods of sitting with weight gain and an increased risk for osteoporosis, diabetes, heart disease and cancer,<sup>1</sup> among other [health hazards](#). Too much sitting is harmful—even if you exercise daily.

### Why take a stretch break?

Stretching exercises encourage lengthening of your muscles and their associated tendons. They counteract the shortening and tightening of muscles that can occur immediately after vigorous exercise, and as a product of aging and inactivity. A sedentary lifestyle that involves long periods of sitting can cause your muscles to shorten and tighten. This reduces your range of motion and can lead to stiffness and pain. Incorporating physical activity into your day, in addition to performing distinct periods of exercise, will minimize sedentary time and help you achieve optimal health. Taking regular breaks to stretch throughout the day can:

- Increase blood flow to the muscles
- Help joints move through their full range of motion
- Decrease risk of injuries such as muscle strains and sprains
- Reduce muscular tension and stiffness
- Enable muscles to work more effectively<sup>2</sup>

Exercises for flexibility should be included as part of a balanced exercise program that also includes:

- Exercise to increase or maintain muscular strength (e.g. strength training)
- Exercise to increase or maintain aerobic capacity (e.g. brisk walking, cycling, running, swimming);
- A healthy diet; and
- Plenty of rest

### How often should I take an exercise break?

In order to reduce prolonged periods of sitting, taking frequent, shorter breaks where you can regularly relax and stretch your muscles is preferable to taking fewer long breaks. If your job involves frequent repetitive motions such as typing and data entry, aim for a 5-minute exercise break for every 30 continuous minutes spent on the computer.



### Where To Start

Healthy adults should do flexibility exercises for all major muscle-tendon groups — neck, shoulders, chest, torso, lower back, hips, legs, and ankles. To ensure you are performing stretches safely and effectively, follow these tips:

- **Strive for symmetry:** Flexibility varies from person to person. Rather than striving for the flexibility of a gymnast, focus on having equal flexibility on both sides of your body (especially if you have a history of a previous injury). Flexibility that is not equal on both sides may be a risk factor for injury.

- **Focus on major muscle groups:** Concentrate your stretches on major muscle groups such as your calves, thighs, hips, lower back, neck and shoulders. Make sure that you stretch both sides and stretch muscles and joints that you routinely use.
- **Don't bounce:** Stretch in a smooth movement, without bouncing. Bouncing as you stretch can injure your muscle and contribute to muscle tightness.
- **Hold your stretch:** Breathe normally and hold each stretch for about 30 seconds; in problem areas, you may need to hold for around 60 seconds.
- **Don't aim for pain:** Expect to feel tension while you're stretching, not pain. If it hurts, you've pushed too far. Back off to the point where you don't feel any pain, then hold the stretch.
- **Maintain your routine:** Stretching can be time-consuming, but you can achieve the most benefits by stretching regularly. Skipping regular stretching means you risk losing the potential benefits.
- **Exercise caution:** If you have a chronic condition or an injury, you might need to adjust your stretching techniques. For example, if you already have a strained muscle, stretching it may cause further harm.

Remember that stretching doesn't mean you can't get injured. Stretching, for instance, won't prevent an overuse injury. Talk to your doctor or physical therapist about the most appropriate way to stretch if you have any health concerns.<sup>3</sup>

#### Other tips to keep yourself moving at work:



Take **REGULAR BREAKS** from sitting by standing up every 30 minutes



Take the **STAIRS** instead of the lift



**STAND UP** or **PACE** whilst on the phone



**WALK OVER** to speak to colleagues instead of emailing them



**KEEP HYDRATED** for frequent toilet trips



**LIMIT** screen time to stay active



Hold a **WALKING** or **STANDING** meeting



Try a **SIT-STAND** desk



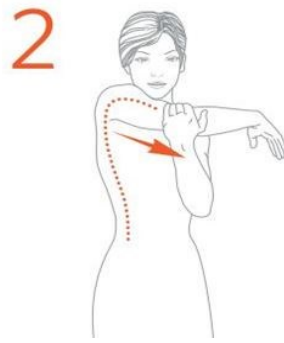
**MOVE AWAY** from your desk at lunchtime

## SAMPLE STRETCHES



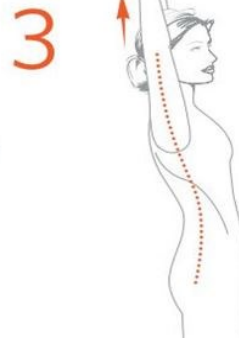
### Shoulder Stretch

With hands in front of body, interlace fingers and turn palms away from body. Gently straighten elbows and reach. Hold stretch for 10-20 seconds.



### Shoulder Stretch

Use your left hand to grasp your right arm above the elbow. Pull shoulder height at right arm across your chest. Hold for 8-10 seconds. Repeat on other side.



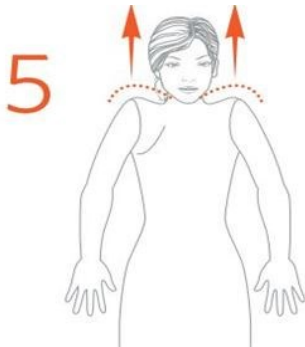
### Upper Body Stretch

Interlace fingers, turn palms upward and straighten arms above head. Elongate arms to stretch through upper sides of your rib cage. Hold for 15-20 seconds.



### Triceps Stretch

With arms overhead, hold right elbow with left hand. Gently pull elbow behind your head, creating a stretch down your right side. Hold for 8-10 seconds. Repeat on left side.



### Shoulder Shrugs

Raise the top of your shoulders towards your ears until you feel the stretch in your neck and shoulders. Hold for 3-5 seconds. Repeat 2-3 times.



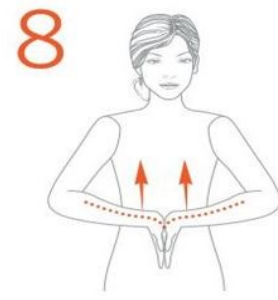
### Neck Tilts

Place arms behind your back, grasp one wrist with the opposite hand and pull while tilting head away from the arm you are stretching. Hold for 8-10 seconds. Reverse and repeat.



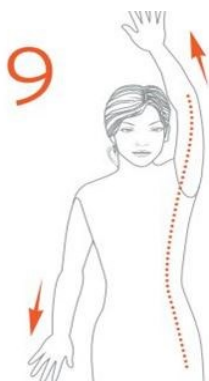
### Wrist/Forearm Stretch

Relax hands and arms at your side. Shake hands and arms for 30 seconds to loosen tension.



### Wrist/Forearm Stretch

Place hands at chest height palm to palm fingers pointing down. Pull hands and forearms upward. Keep palms together and elbows even. Hold 10 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



### Side Stretch

Stand or sit with back straight. Push one hand downward while stretching opposite hand up and over head. Hold for 8-10 seconds. Repeat on opposite side.



### Back and Hip Stretch

Cross left leg over right leg. Keeping shoulders square with the front of your body, look over left shoulder. Place right hand on left knee and apply pressure. Hold for 8-10 seconds. Repeat on other side.



### Lower Back Stretch

Place palms on lower back, fingers pointing downward. Gently push your palms forward and bend your spine backwards. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Repeat 2-3 times.



### Hand, Wrist & Forearm Relaxation

Relax hands and arms at your side. Shake hands and arms for 30 seconds to loosen tension.



### 1. The Elbow Pump

You can do this one while sitting down. Touch your opposite shoulder blade, and then gently grab your elbow, and pull it towards the opposite side.



### 2. The Knee-Jerk

While sitting, lift your leg up and grab onto your knee. Try and pull your leg towards your chest, and see how close you can get it. Hold for 10 seconds.



### 3. The Toe Toucher

While sitting, straighten your legs, and reach out to try and touch your toes.



### 4. The Ballerina

Lift your arm over your head and reach towards the opposite side. Remember to keep your back upright.



### 5. The Backwards Clap

Put both of your hands behind your back with palms touching, and push out your chest like you're trying to intimidate the co worker across from you. Hold this pose for 5 seconds.



Please note that the use of ball chairs is prohibited in county facilities.

### 6. The I Don't Know

Raise both of your shoulders at the same time. Hold for 5 seconds, and then release. As you bring your shoulders down say "I dunno".



### 7. The Bobble Head

Lean your head down, and rotate your neck from left to right. Remember to go slow, and ideally sing a song so you don't look so weird.



### 8. Touch The Sky

Interlock both hands together, and try your best to touch the sky, with palms facing the ceiling. Hold for 5 seconds. Just watch out in case you have sweat stains under your shirt ;)



### 9. The Knee-Pump

Cross your leg, and gently push down on your knee, stretching the glutes. As your pushing down, remember to exhale slowly.



### 10. The Neck Breaker

Take your hand and grab the opposite side of your head. Gently, and I really mean gently, pull your head towards your shoulder. No need to have your ear actually touch your shoulder, only moving a few inches is good enough.



### 11. The Proposal

Get down with one knee on the floor and one knee bent, as if you were about to propose to your co-worker, and slowly lean forward. Hold for 5 seconds. Switch and repeat.



### 12. Reach For The Sky

In the same position as the one above, but this time look up to the sky, and put your hands up. This one is great for your abdominals.



### 13. I'm A Little TeaCup

In the same position as the one above, but now put your right arm on your waist, and then take your left arm, reach it up to the sky, and then slowly towards the right side.



### 14. Hand Holding

Grab your hand and bend it slowly towards you until you feel a slight burn in your wrist. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 3 times. Then grab your hand with your palms facing out and pull back until you feel a stretch in your wrist.



### 15. One Arm Hug

Take your left arm, and grab your right shoulder. With your right hand, grab your elbow and gently pull it towards your right shoulder. Repeat with the opposite arm.



### 16. Push The Wall

Find a wall or doorway, and with one arm at a time, press your hand into the wall while turning your body away until you feel a stretch in your shoulder. Remember not to go too hard though, you won't be able to move the wall, trust me.



## Mobile Apps That Keep You Moving At Work



**Move: Daily  
Activity To Stay  
Healthy (iPhone)**



**BlockFit  
(iPhone)**



**Stand Up! The  
Work Break  
Timer (iPhone)**



**1 Minute Desk  
Workout (iPhone)**



**7 Minute Workout  
(Android & iPhone)**



**100 Office Workouts  
(Android)**



**Randomly RemindMe  
(Android)**



**StandApp (iPhone)**



**Stretching & Eye  
Exercises (Android)**



# STRETCHING for WORKING AMERICA

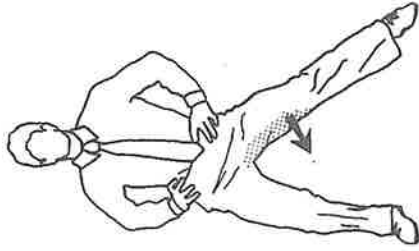
( A Ten Minute Sequence )

Note: If you have had any recent surgery, muscle, or joint problem, please consult your personal health care professional before starting a stretching or exercise program.



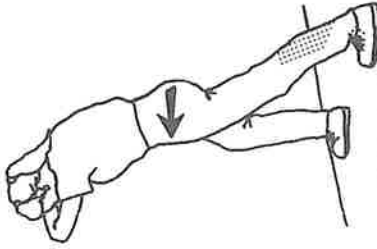
1

If possible, hold on to something for balance. Lift your right foot up off the floor and rotate foot and ankle 7-8 times clockwise, then 7-8 times counter-clockwise. Repeat for left foot and ankle.



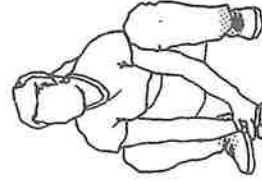
5

Start with your feet pointed straight ahead and a little more than shoulder width apart. Bend right knee slightly and move left hip downward toward right knee. This gives you a stretch in left inner thigh (left groin). Hold for 10-15 seconds and repeat for right groin.



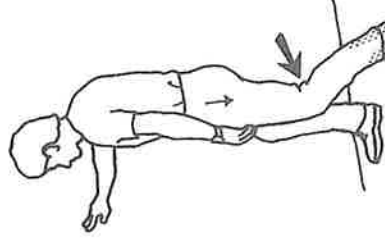
2

To stretch your calf, stand a little ways from a solid support and lean on it with your forearms, your head resting on your hands. Place your right foot on the ground in front of you, leg bent, keeping left leg straight, behind you. Slowly move your hips forward until you feel a stretch in the calf of left leg. Be sure to keep your left heel on the ground and your toes pointed straight ahead. Hold an easy stretch for 15-20 seconds. Do not bounce. Repeat for right leg.



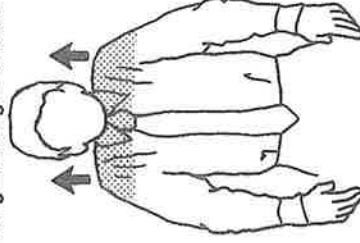
6

With your feet shoulder width apart, toes pointed out (approx. 10°) and heels on the ground, bend your knees and squat. If you have trouble staying in this position hold on to something for support. This is a great stretch for your ankles, Achilles tendon area, groin, lower back and hips. Hold stretch for 10-15 seconds. If knee pain is present, discontinue this stretch.



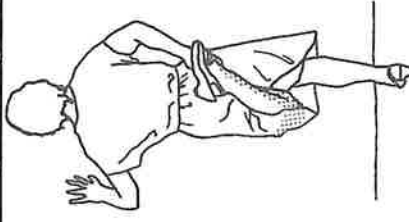
3

Start from the same position as stretch #2. Push away from the solid support and slightly bend the left leg (which is behind you), keeping the foot flat. Most of your weight should be on your left leg. This gives you a lower stretch in the back of the leg (the soleus and Achilles tendon areas). Hold for 10-12 seconds, each leg. This area needs only a slight feeling of stretch.



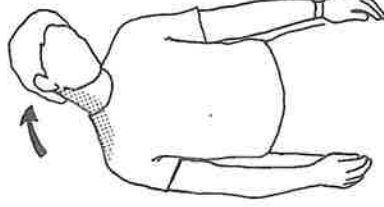
7

Raise the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel slight tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold this feeling of tension for 3-5 seconds, then relax your shoulders downward into their normal position. Do this 3 times. Shoulder shrugs are good to use at the first signs of tightness or tension in the shoulder or neck area.



4

Gently pull your left foot (from inside of foot) toward buttocks with your right hand until you feel a mild stretch. If necessary place your other hand on a support for balance. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Stretch other leg. Breathe. This stretch can also be done using same hand to same foot, with hand holding on top of foot, if preferred.



8

Start with your head in a comfortable, aligned position. Slowly tilt your head to the left side to stretch the muscles on the right side of your neck. Hold stretch for 10 seconds. Feel a good, even stretch. Do not overstretch. Repeat 2-3 times to each side.

When you stretch, keep the following points in mind:

- Stretches should be held for 10-30 seconds, depending on which stretch you are doing.
- Breathe slowly, rhythmically and under control.
- Relax your mind and body as much as possible.
- Always stretch within your comfortable limits, never to the point of pain.
- Do not compare yourself to others. We are all different. Comparisons only lead to overstretching.
- The feeling of stretch tells you whether you are stretching correctly or not.

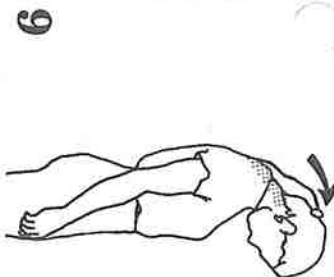
STRETCHING FOR WORKING AMERICA (10 minute sequence) has been excerpted from the book, STRETCHING FOR WORKING AMERICA, ©1988, Robert A. and Jean E. Anderson, Sally Carlson.

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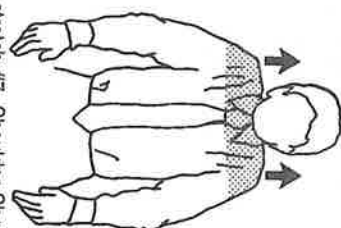


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**9**  
Gently tilt your head forward to stretch the back of your neck. Hold for 10 seconds. Hold only tensions that feel good. Do not stretch to the point of pain. Repeat stretch 2 times.



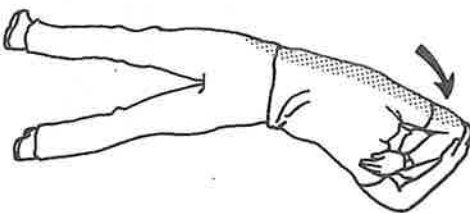
**10**  
Repeat stretch #7, Shoulder Shrug: Raise the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel slight tension for 3-5 seconds, then relax your shoulders downward into their normal position. Do this 3 times.



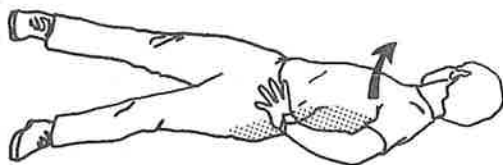
**11**  
Interlace your fingers above your head. With your palms facing upward, push your arms slightly back and up. Feel the stretch in arms, shoulders, and upper back. Hold stretch for 15 seconds. Do not hold your breath. As always, keep knees slightly bent for better balance and to protect your back.



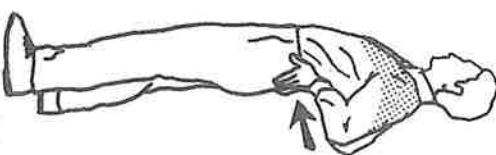
**12**  
Hold left elbow with right hand behind head, then gently pull elbow downward until an easy tension-stretch is felt in left shoulder or back of upper left arm (triceps). Hold easy stretch for 15 seconds. Do not overstretch. Repeat, holding right elbow with left hand.



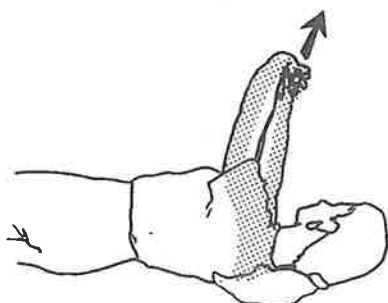
**13**  
As in stretch #12, hold left elbow with right hand behind your head. Keeping knees slightly bent, gently pull left elbow downward as you bend to the right at your hips. Hold an easy stretch for 15 seconds, keeping your knees slightly bent. Repeat stretch holding right elbow with left hand as you bend to the left.



**14**  
Start with your hands on your hips, feet pointed straight ahead, knees slightly bent. Rotate hips to the right as you look over your right shoulder. Hold an easy stretch for 10 seconds. Stretch each side twice. Be relaxed and breathe easily. This is a good stretch for lower back and hips.



**15**  
Standing with knees slightly bent, place palms on lower back just above hips, fingers pointing downward. Gently push your palms forward to create an extension in the lower back. Hold comfortable pressure for 10-12 seconds. Repeat twice. Use this stretch after sitting for an extended period of time.



**16**  
Interlace fingers in front of you with palms facing outward and arms straightened. Pressing palms forward, feel the stretch in your arms and the upper part of your back and shoulder blades. Hold stretch for 10-15 seconds. Do stretch 2 times.



**17**  
Separate and straighten your fingers until stretch-tension is felt. Hold for 10 seconds. Relax.



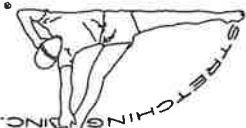
**18**  
Bend your finger at the knuckles and squeeze for 10 seconds. Relax.



**19**  
Repeat stretch #17. Separate and straighten your fingers until stretch-tension is felt. Hold for 10 seconds. Relax.



**20**  
Using your left hand, apply pressure to your right thumb, gently pulling them backward to feel an easy stretch. Hold for 10 seconds. Relax. Repeat stretch #17 and #18 once more. Repeat for other hand.



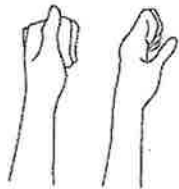
## Stretches for the hands and forearms that can be done at the workstation

1. a) Start with your hand open.

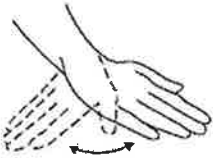


b) Make a fist. Keep your thumb straight, not tucked under your fingers.

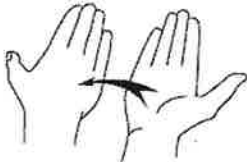
c) Slide your fingertips up your palm so the tips of your fingers are near the base of your fingers and you should feel a stretch. Do not force your fingers with your other hand if something is painful.



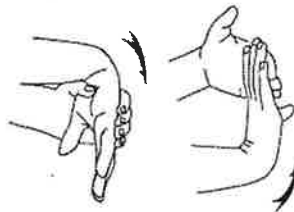
2. With your hand open and facing down, gently bend wrist from side to side, as far as possible. Hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



3. Start by stretching your arm and hand out and slowly rotate the wrist down until you feel a stretch. Hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Next, rotate the palm up until you feel a stretch. Repeat 3 times.

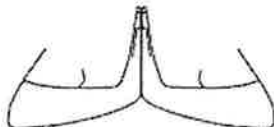


4. Grasp your hand and hold your fingers with the other hand. Slowly bend your wrist down until you feel a stretch. Hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Relax. Repeat 3 times. Then slowly bend your wrist up until



you feel the stretch. Hold and relax as above.

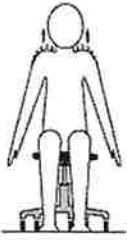
5. Sitting with your elbows on the table and palms together, slowly lower wrists to the table until you feel a stretch (your elbows will move outward a bit). Be sure to keep your palms together throughout the stretch. Hold 5 to 7 seconds. Relax. Repeat 3 times.



## Stretches for the neck and shoulders

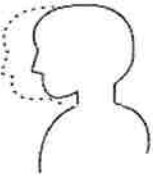
1. Shoulder Shrug: The purpose of the shoulder shrug is to relieve early symptoms of tightness or tension in the shoulder and neck area.

- Raise the top of your shoulders towards your ears until you feel slight tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold this feeling of tension for 3 to 5 seconds. Then relax your shoulders downward into their normal position. Do this 2 or 3 times



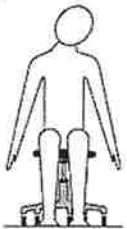
2. Head Glide: The head glide helps to stretch your chest, neck and shoulder muscles.

- Sit or stand upright. Without lifting your chin, glide your head straight back. You will know you are doing this exercise right if it gives you the feeling of a double chin. Hold for 20 counts and repeat 5 to 10 times.



3. Neck Relaxer: This exercise helps to relax the neck.

- Drop your head slowly to the left, trying to touch your left ear to your left shoulder. Repeat on the right side. Slowly drop your chin to your chest, turn your head all the way to the left, and then turn all the way to the right.



4. Shoulder Roll: This exercise will help relax the shoulder muscles.

- Slowly roll your shoulders backward five times in a circular motion. Next, roll your

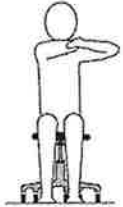


shoulders forwards.

## Stretches for the back, side and legs



1. Back / Side Stretch: Interlace your fingers and lift your arms over your head, keeping the elbows straight. Press arms as far back as you can. To stretch your sides, slowly lean to the left and then to the right.



2. Middle / Upper Back Stretch: Hold your right arm with your left hand just above the elbow. Gently push your elbow toward your left shoulder. Hold stretch for 5 seconds. Repeat with your left arm.



3. Back Curl (will also stretch your legs): Grasp your shin. Lift the leg off the floor. Bend forward (curling your back), and reach your nose to your knee. Repeat with the other leg.



4. Ankle Flex and Stretch: Hold one foot off the floor with your leg straight. Alternately flex your ankle (point your toes up) and extend (point your toes down). Repeat with the other leg.



5. Leg Lift: Sit forward on the chair so that your back is not touching the chair's back. Place feet flat on the floor. With a straight leg, lift one foot a few inches off the floor. Hold momentarily, and return your foot to the floor. Repeat with the other leg.



