

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,¹ 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 effectively²

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.³

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



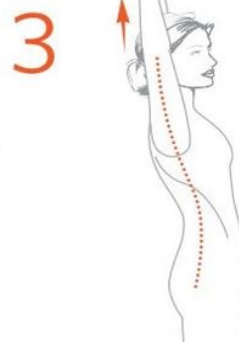
Shoulder Stretch

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.



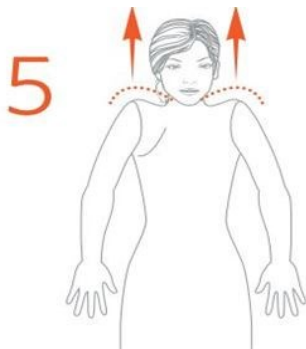
Upper Body Stretch

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.



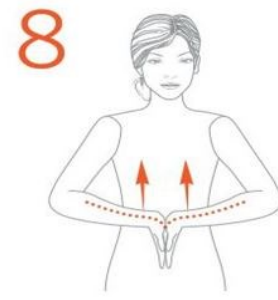
Neck Tilts

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.



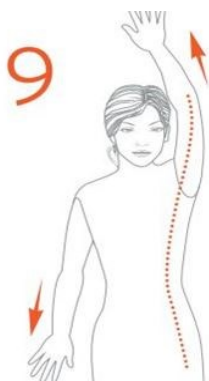
Wrist/Forearm Stretch

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.



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".



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

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)



RSIGuard is a software application designed to help reduce your exposure to computer-related discomfort, encourage healthier work habits and allow you to track your progress. Software can dynamically remind you to be aware of how you interact with your workstation and remind you to pay attention to your body and rest when needed.

*RSIGuard is typically installed following an ergonomic evaluation. See below for information on how to request an ergonomic evaluation.

HOW TO REQUEST AN ERGONOMIC EVALUATION

If you feel you need an ergonomic evaluation due to any of the following reasons, then you must complete the “Request an Ergonomic Evaluation” form and submit it to the County’s Ergo Desk. Follow the procedure below for best results.

Reasons to request an ergonomic evaluation:

1. **EMPLOYEE CONCERN ABOUT WORKSTATION SET UP**
2. **EMPLOYEE CONCERN WITH PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT**
3. **NEW OR REVISED PROCESS, PROCEDURE OR TASK**
4. **NEW HIRE EMPLOYEE OR NEW WORKSTATION**
5. **SAFETY CONCERN**
6. **EXISTING WC CLAIM**



1. Download the request form from the Ergonomics Web page at: <http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/personnel/safetyandergo/ergonomics/>
2. Identify the reason why you need an ergonomic evaluation and document it on the request form. Add additional comments to describe your situation further.
3. Submit the request to your supervisor or manager for signature to begin the ergonomics process.
4. Email or fax or interoffice mail the Ergonomic Request form to Ergo Desk at ErgoDesk@co.monterey.ca.us or Risk Management 168 W. Alisal St., 3rd floor.
5. We will respond to your request within 1-5 days. You will then receive an Office of Ergonomics Self Assessment to complete and instructed to complete an **online survey** (pending).
6. Once you complete the **Self Assessment (SA) and save the online survey**, return the SA to the Ergo Desk.
7. An ergonomic evaluation date and time will be set up for you following receipt of your self-assessment within 1-5 days.
8. Please confirm your evaluation date and time. If you are unable to make your appointment, contact the Ergo Desk immediately to reschedule as we are charged for no shows.
9. To learn more about the process following your evaluation, please see the following link: <http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/personnel/safetyandergo/ergonomics/>
10. For additional comments or questions, contact the County Safety Officer at 831-755-5686.

References

1. "Sedentary Behavior and Cardiovascular Morbidity and Mortality: A Science Advisory From the American Heart Association." American Heart Association Science Advisory 134, no. 13 (August 15, 2016): e262-79. <http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/134/13/e262>.
2. Heller-Ono, Alison. "Stretch-Time: On-Site Stretching and Self-Care Program." County of Monterey Office of Ergonomics . <http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/personnel/safetyandergo/ergonomics/pdf/StretchTimeProgram.pdf>.
3. Mayo Clinic . "Stretching Essentials ." <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/stretching/art-20047931?pg=2>.