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Stretch Exercises for Desktop Users

by Eric Lucero

Prolonged sitting at a desk or computer terminal can cause muscular tension and pain. Stretching relaxes tense muscles and increases blood circulation which brings nutrients and releases toxins from tissues. In addition to micro-breaks (every 20 seconds for 20 seconds), desktop users should stretch periodically throughout the day especially body areas that feel tense or uncomfortable.

Stretch exercises should be done slowly without “bouncing” or pain. stretch to where you feel a slight, easy tension. hold this feeling for 5-20 seconds. as you hold this initial stretch, the feeling of tension should diminish. if it does not, ease off slightly into a more comfortable stretch.

After holding this initial stretch, you can move a fraction of an inch farther until you feel mild tension again. This secondary stretch should be held for another 10-15 seconds. If the tension increases or becomes painful, you are overstretching. Ease off a bit to a comfortable stretch.

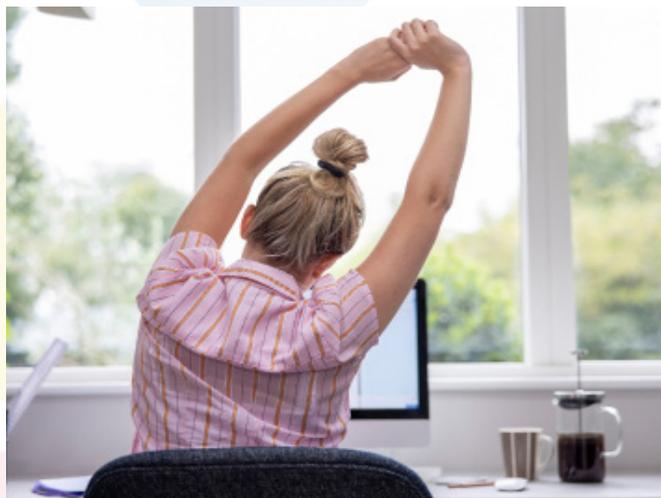
The key to stretching is to be relaxed while you concentrate on the area being stretched. Your breathing should be slow, deep, and rhythmic. Do not worry about how far you can stretch.

Separate and straighten your fingers until tension is felt. Hold for 10 seconds, relax, and bend the knuckles and hold for another 10 seconds. Repeat first outward stretch once more.

Raise your eyebrows and open your eyes as wide as possible. At the same time, open your mouth to stretch the muscles around your nose and chin and stick your tongue out. Hold this stretch for 5-10 seconds. Caution: If you have clicking or popping noises when opening your mouth, check with your dentist before doing this stretch.

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 2-3 times.

With your fingers interlaced behind the head, elbows straight out at sides, the upper body in an aligned position, pull your shoulder blades toward each other to create a feeling of tension through the upper back and shoulder blades. Hold this feeling of mild tension for 8-10 seconds, then relax. Do several times.



Start with the head in a comfortable, aligned position. Slowly tilt head to left side to stretch muscles on side of neck. Hold stretch for 10-20 seconds. Do not overstretch. Then tilt head to the right side and stretch again. Do this 2-3 times for each side.

From a stable, aligned sitting position turn your chin toward your left shoulder to create a stretch on the right side of your neck. Hold the tension for 10-20 seconds. Do this twice for each side.

Gently tilt your head forward to stretch the back of the neck. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times. Hold only tensions that feel safe. Do not stretch to the point of pain.

Hold your left arm just above the elbow with the right hand. Now gently pull elbow toward opposite shoulder as you look over your left shoulder. Hold stretch for 15-20 seconds, and repeat for the other side.

Interlace fingers, then straighten your arms in front. The palm should be facing away from the body. Feel the stretch in your arms and through the upper part of the shoulder blades. Hold this stretch for 10-15 seconds on each side at least 2 times.

Interlace fingers, then turn your palms upwards above the head as you straighten your arms. Elongate your arms as you feel a stretch through the arms and upper sides of the rib cage. Hold for 10-20 seconds. Only hold a stretch that feels relaxing. Repeat 3 times on each side.

Hold the left elbow with the right hand, then gently pull the elbow behind your head until an easy tension-stretch is felt in the shoulder or back of the upper arm (triceps). Hold for 30 seconds. Do

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not overstretch and repeat on the other side.

Hold onto your lower leg, just below the knee. Gently pull the bent leg toward your chest and isolate a stretch in the side of your upper leg. Use the right arm to pull the bent leg towards the opposite shoulder. Hold for 10-20 seconds and repeat on the other side.

Sit with the left leg bent over the right, then rest the right elbow or forearm on the outside of the upper thigh of the left leg. Apply controlled, steady pressure toward the right using the elbow or forearm for leverage. As you do this, look over your left shoulder. Hold for 15 seconds and repeat on the other side.



The next stretch is performed with the fingers interlaced behind your back. Slowly turn your elbows inward while straightening your arms. This stretch can be done at any time. Hold for 5-15 seconds and perform twice on each side.

To stretch your calf, stand a little way from a wall for solid support and lean on it with your forehead resting on your hands. Bend over and place your foot on the floor in front while leaving the other leg straight. Slowly move your hips forward until you feel a stretch in the calf of your straight leg. Be sure to keep the heel of the foot of the straight leg on the floor and your toes pointed straight ahead. Hold an easy stretch for 30 seconds. Stretch both legs.

Lastly, computer users can minimize eye strain using the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, gently focus your eyes on an object that is 20 feet away, for 20 seconds.

For additional questions, contact [Risk Control](#).