

Safety Alert

Ergonomic Stretches for the Office

Working in an office every day can take a serious toll on your muscle and skeletal health. To avoid getting sore and worn out, experts recommend taking a stretch break every 20 to 30 minutes.

The Mayo Clinic has developed a step by step guide to stretches you can do at your desk or in your office. You can also find out how to keep your back, shoulder, neck and hands healthy with simple stretches.

Finger stretch



Working hard at your desk? To avoid getting sore and worn out, take a stretch break every 20 to 30 minutes. Relaxed and focused after stretching, you may actually complete your work faster and more accurately. If you spend lots of time clutching a pen or typing on a keyboard, start with the finger stretch. Separate and straighten your fingers until you feel a stretch, keeping your hand in alignment with your wrist (left). Hold for 10 seconds. Next, bend the end and middle knuckles of your fingers (right), keeping your hand and wrist in the same position. Hold for 10 seconds. Relax and repeat.

Back scratch



It may look like you're scratching your back, but you're really stretching the back of your arm. Reach behind your head and place your hand on your upper back, keeping your arm close to your ear. Gently hold your elbow with your opposite hand. Pull your elbow toward the back of your head and reach your hand toward the middle of your back until you feel a gentle stretch. Hold for 10 to 15 seconds. Relax. Repeat on other side.

Arm and shoulder stretch



Press your hands away from your body to stretch your arms and shoulders. Lace your fingers together and turn your palms facing out. Straighten your arms in front of you. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds. Relax. Repeat two to three times.

Chest stretch



This stretches the muscles of your chest, upper back and the back of your neck. Lace your fingers together behind your head, bringing your elbows back as far as possible. Squeeze your shoulder blades together until you feel your muscles stretching. Hold for 20 seconds. Relax. Repeat.

Side neck stretch



To stretch the muscles along the side of your neck, face forward and look straight ahead. Tilt your head toward one side, gently pushing your ear toward your shoulder. Hold for 10 to 15 seconds. Lift your head into a normal, upright position. Relax. Repeat three to five times on each side.

Head turn



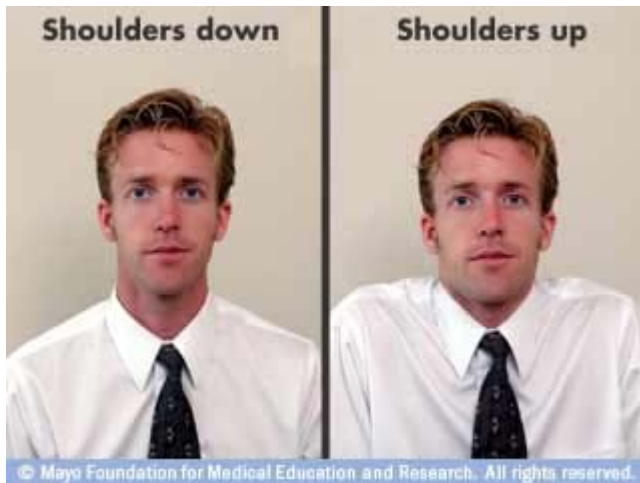
To stretch the muscles along the side and back of your neck and at the top of your back, start facing forward. Slowly turn your head and look to one side until your chin is parallel with your shoulder. Be sure to keep your shoulders straight ahead. Hold for five to 10 seconds. Return to your starting position and relax. Repeat twice on each side.

Chin tuck



The chin tuck also loosens stiff neck and shoulder muscles. Start facing straight ahead. Keeping your back straight, pull your chin toward your chest until you feel a stretch along the back of your neck. Hold for five to 10 seconds. Relax and return to your starting position. Repeat two to three times.

Shoulder shrug



The shoulder shrug targets tight neck, shoulder and upper back muscles. Slowly bring your shoulders up toward your ears. Hold for three to five seconds, then roll your shoulders back and down. Relax. Repeat five to 10 times.

Back stretch



You'll feel this stretch along your mid- and lower back muscles. Sit forward in your chair so that there's a little room between your back and the back of the chair. Face forward and cross your right leg over your left. Put your left hand on your right knee, and gently pull toward your left side while slowly turning your head and shoulders to the right. Keep turning until you see the wall behind your right shoulder. Be careful not to force the turn — go just until you feel a nice

stretch in your back. Hold for 10 to 15 seconds. Relax and repeat on the other side.

Caution

Always be careful not to overstretch. These gentle moves should feel good — never painful.

For an illustrated guide to *ergonomic stretches you and can do in the office* see:
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stretching/WL00030>.