



Occupational  
Health Clinics  
for Ontario  
Workers Inc.

Centres de  
santé des  
travailleurs (ses)  
de l'Ontario Inc.

## Exercises at Your Workstation

### Prevention Through Intervention



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Many office workers have jobs where they sit or stand for long periods. Working in one position can lead to muscle pain and strain. Exercises done at the desk can help.

## Exercise Breaks

Actions that are frequently repeated or held statically for periods of time can result in muscle fatigue and tightness. The following exercises are designed to counteract the movements used on the job by reducing postural fatigue, aches, and pains. You can do these exercises right at your workstation.

Exercises marked with an asterisk (\*) are stretch exercises and require the following exercise technique.

1. Take a deep breath in through your nose and make your abdomen expand
2. Breathe all the air slowly out through your mouth
3. Pause and relax
4. Then, stretch the muscle
5. Hold for 10 counts
6. Ease off, repeat steps one to five, stretching a little further each time

Repeat exercise three to five times each, unless otherwise specified. It takes 10 minutes to complete the entire program. Many of the exercises can be done separately throughout the day to relieve specific postural fatigue.

## Face and Trunk Exercises

### Face Stretch

Raise your eyebrows and open your eyes as wide as possible. At the same time, open your mouth and breathe in deeply. Breathe out long and slowly as you purse your lips and relax your eyes and brows.

### Tall Stretch

- a) Interlock fingers, palms up.
- b) Stretch arms above the head until they are straight.
- c) Do not arch the back.
- d) Relax and repeat.



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Face and Trunk Exercises

# Shoulder Exercises

## Overhead Stretch

- a) With arms extended overhead and palms together, stretch arms upward and slightly backwards.
- b) Relax and repeat.



## Forward Stretch

- a) Interlace your fingers in front of you at shoulder height.
- b) Turn your palms outward as you extend your arms forward and feel a stretch.
- c) Relax and repeat.



## Shoulder Roll

- a) Roll the shoulders, raise them, pull them back, then drop them and relax.
- b) Repeat in the opposite direction.



# Back Exercises

## Backward Stretch

With your arms relaxed at your side and using the relaxed breathing technique:

- a) Shrug your shoulders, hold, relax.
- b) Pull your shoulder blades back, hold, relax.
- c) Roll your shoulders forward, hold, relax.



## Middle Back Release

- a) With your fingers interlaced behind your head, keep your elbows straight out to the side and your upper body in a well aligned position.
- b) Pull your shoulder blades together to create a feeling of tension through your upper back and shoulder blades.
- c) Relax and repeat.



# Neck Exercises

| Neck Rotation  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Sit or stand with arms relaxed by your side.</li><li>b) Look over one shoulder as far as possible</li><li>c) Do the same in the opposite direction.</li></ul> |  |

| Neck Side Bends  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) While sitting or standing, move your head to your right shoulder, trying to touch your shoulder with your ear (keep the shoulder down).</li><li>b) Repeat on the left side.</li></ul> |  |

| Nose to Armpit  |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) While sitting or standing, tip your head to one side (ear to shoulder) and drop that shoulder slightly, then move your head toward the opposite armpit.</li><li>b) Repeat alternately to the other side.</li></ul> |  |



### Neck Half Circles

- a) Sit or stand in a comfortable position.
- b) Roll your head slowly from side to front to side, keeping your back straight.
- c) If a particular position feels tight, stop and hold a stretch.



## Elbow and Wrist Exercises

### Prayer Position

- a) Put the palms of your hands together, so that your elbows are bent and your wrists are at right angles.
- b) Keep the palms of the hands together, push your right palm and fingers firmly against the left and bend the left wrist back.
- c) Repeat to the other side.



### Finger Stretch

- a) Clench your hand into a fist with the palm facing you.
- b) Extend your fingers and hold and return to the fist position.
- c) Repeat with the other hand.



### Thumb Roll

a) With your forearm and hand in a mid-position, so that your hand is resting on the little finger border make large circles with your thumbs in both directions.



### Hand Bend

a) With your wrists and your fingers straight, bend your fingers at the knuckles.



### Finger Curl

a) Keep your knuckles and wrist straight. Bend and straighten your fingers.



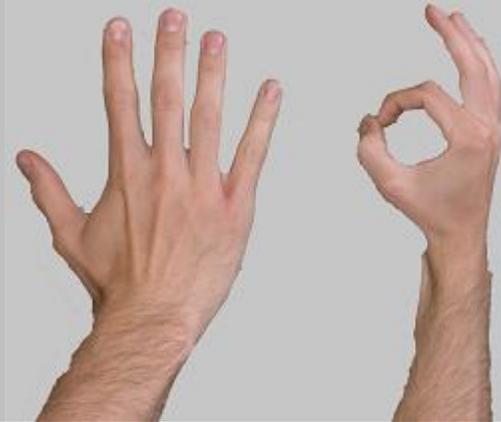
### Hand Stretch

- a) Start with your fingers out straight. Make a fist, being sure each finger joint is bending as much as possible. Straighten your fingers as much as possible.



### The "Okay"

- a) Touch thumb to your fingertips, one at a time, making a circle. Open your hand wide after touching each finger.



### Wrist Extensor Stretch

- a) Extend your arm in front of you with your palm down.  
b) Bend your wrist, pointing your hand toward the floor.  
c) With your other hand, gently bend your wrist farther until you feel a mild to moderate stretch in your forearm.  
d) Hold for at least 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 2 to 4 times.



### Wrist Flexor Stretch

- a) Extend your arm in front of you with your palm up.
- b) Bend your wrist, pointing your hand toward the ceiling.
- c) With your other hand, gently bend your wrist farther until you feel a mild to moderate stretch in your forearm.
- d) Hold for at least 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 2 to 4 times.



### Hand Spread

- a) Rest your hand on the table with your palm down. Spread your fingers wide apart and then bring them together again.



# Leg Exercises

| Leg Lift  |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Sit forward on the chair so that your back is not touching the chair's back.</li><li>b) Place feet flat on the floor.</li><li>c) With a straight leg, lift one foot a few inches off the floor.</li><li>d) Hold momentarily, return it to the floor and repeat with the other leg.</li><li>e) Keep the rest of your body in a proper posture</li></ul> |  |

| Ankle Flex and Stretch   |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Hold one foot off the floor, leg straight.</li><li>b) Alternately flex ankle (pointing toes up) and extend (pointing toes toward the floor).</li><li>c) Repeat with the other leg.</li><li>d) Keep the rest of your body in a proper posture.</li></ul> |  |

| Toe-in, toe-out  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Place feet shoulder-width apart, heels on the floor.</li><li>b) Swing toes in, then out.</li><li>c) Keep the rest of your body in a proper posture.</li></ul> |  |



## Hip Flexor

- a) Sit on the front edge of your chair, with thighs parallel to the floor and feet below knees;
- b) Place foot (area between ankle and heel) on your knee;
- c) Work towards shin being parallel with the ground;
- d) To deepen the stretch, bend at the hips and tilt your torso forward.
- e) Hold five breaths; alternate sides; do both sides twice.



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