Workstation Stretches

Why is stretching important?
No matter how well a workstation is designed or set up, problems may still arise if attention is not paid to how we sit or how we construct our day. Working at a computer often involves sitting in one position for most of the day. This lack of movement can lead to stiffness and put a strain on our bodies. Working at a computer often involves sitting in one position for most of the day. This lack of movement can lead to stiffness and put a strain on our bodies. Stretching is a low impact method of exercise to increase flexibility, reduce the risk of injury and address muscular imbalances.

What can we do to minimize the strain?
It is recommended that a person take a 5-10 minute break every hour while working at a computer and it is advised that you get up and walk around. It is important to vary your work tasks such as breaking up keyboard work by doing other duties or tasks that involve moving around or changing body position. Try to include standing up and moving around. Don't forget your eyes, they can become strained too, looking away from the screen occasionally and focusing on an object in the distance can help. Regular rest breaks ease the muscle aches, eyestrain and stress. Relaxing the muscles, stretching and changing position can minimise the problems. It is recommended that you stretch 2-3 times a day.

How to stretch?
Only stretch to the point when you feel pressure - not pain. If you have an injury, you should see your doctor before completing the stretches for the affected area.

Lower you chair so that both feet remain flat on the floor throughout.

Stretch slowly and smoothly; hold the stretch for 10-20 seconds (unless an alternative length of time is specified) and then release slowly.

Ensure that you breathe regularly and normally throughout the stretches.

Do not force the stretch or bounce.

If you feel pain you should stop.

Stretches:

1. Relieving Eyestrain
You can relax your eyes in a number of ways. The key is to focus on objects at different distances. You can follow your finger if nothing else will do. Focus near, then far, then near, then far. Do this a couple of times. Then take a few long blinks.

2. Fingers
Start with your hand open, clench the fingers and make a fist. Keep your thumb straight and not tucked under your fingers. Next slide your fingers upwards so that your fingertips are in front of the base of your fingers and you should be able to feel a stretch. Do not use your other hand to force your fingers if something is painful.

3. Wrists
With your hand open and palm facing downwards, gently move your hand from side to side, as far as is comfortable keeping the forearm still. At the end of each movement hold the position for 3-5 seconds and repeat 3 times.
4. Wrist Rotations
Again with your hand open and palms facing upwards, rotate the hand until the palm is facing downwards and you can feel a stretch. Hold for 3-5 seconds. Rotate the hand back till the palm is facing upwards and you can feel another stretch. Repeat 3 times.

5. Wrist Flexes
Hold the fingers of one hand in the other hand and slowly bend your wrist down until you can feel a stretch. Hold the stretch for 3-5 seconds and relax. Slowly bend your wrist up until you can feel a stretch and hold. Repeat 3 times.

6. Steeple
Sit with your elbows on the desk and your palms together, slowly lower your wrists until you can feel a stretch (your elbows will have moved outwards slightly). Keep your palms together throughout the stretch. Repeat 3 times.

7. Hands behind Head
Interlace your fingers behind your head, keep your elbows straight out to the sides whilst sat up straight. Pull your shoulder blades towards each other; you should be able to feel the tension in your upper back and shoulder blades.

8. Shoulders
Hold your left arm with your right hand just above the elbow. As you look over your left shoulder, gently pull your elbow towards the opposite shoulder until a stretch can be felt. Repeat with the other arm.

9. Upper Back
Interlace your fingers and straighten your arms out in front of you. Palms should be facing away from you. You should be able to feel the stretch in your arms and through the upper part of your back (shoulder blades area).

10. Shoulder Shrugs
Raise your shoulders towards your ears; you should be able to feel a slight tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold for 3-5 seconds then relax your shoulders downwards into their normal position. Repeat 3 times.

Note: This is a good stretch to use at the first sign of tension or stiffness in the shoulder and neck area. Be aware of where your shoulders are, as we get tense they creep upwards towards our ears.
11. Upwards Reach
Interlace your fingers, turn your palms upwards and straighten your arms up above your head. Elongate your arms so that you can feel a stretch through them and in the upper sides of your rib cage. Breathe deeply.

12. Shoulder Blades
Sit with the chest lifted and the arms just below shoulder height. Keep the elbows bent and squeeze the shoulder blades together.

13. Shoulder Rolls
In a single smooth movement lift both shoulders upwards towards your ears, press your shoulders back, and down in a circular motion.

14. Arm Circles
Keeping the arms straight lift the arms up and over your head, bring your arms back down to just below shoulder level, feel the stretch and relax and return to the starting position. This can be done either with both arms together or one at a time.

15. Alternates Stretch
Extend your right arm above your head. Reach down to the floor with your left arm as you reach up with the right arm. Stretch through your fingers. Repeat on the other side. This can also be performed while standing.

16. Neck
Have your arms hanging loosely by your sides and drop your left ear towards your left shoulder. Keep your shoulders relaxed and down thorough out the stretch. Repeat on the other side.

17. Double Chin
Looking straight ahead, move your head straight back, keeping your eyes level. It should feel like you are creating a double chin. Do not hold but repeat 3-5 times.
18. Chest
Interlace your fingers behind your back with your palms facing in towards your back. Slowly turn your elbows inwards while straightening your arms until a stretch is felt. Lift your breastbone slightly upwards as you stretch.

19. Front of Thigh
Begin standing with your feet shoulder width apart. You can use a wall to hold on to for support if you have trouble with balance. Bring your heel slowly towards your buttock; use the same side arm to gently pull the foot in until you can feel a stretch. Lower the leg back down and repeat on the other side.

20. Back of Thigh
Begin standing with your feet shoulder width apart. Bring one knee up towards your chest, put your hands underneath the thigh and pull it in towards your chest. Lower the leg down and then repeat with the other leg.

21. Lower Back and Thigh
In sitting hold on to the upper part of the left leg, just above the knee and behind the knee, gently pull your bent leg towards your chest. Repeat on the other side.

22. Back and Chest
Place your hands on your back just above your hips with your elbows back. Gently press your elbows together and slightly forwards with your hands. Lift the breastbone upwards slightly as you hold the stretch. Ensure you keep breathing.

Produced by Cheryl Lingard
Brought to you by the Community Activity & Lifestyle Team
Contact details:
Extension 2349
SSDCAactiveWorkplace@southsomerset.gov.uk