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## Best Stretches for Office Workers

Sitting in front of a desk every day can wreak havoc on your body, especially since most of us don't have the best posture. Hunching the shoulders and slumping in your seat can cause back pain, headaches, tension and tightness in your back, neck and shoulders. The following stretches target the muscles of the back, neck and shoulders as well as the hips and glutes. Taking time to do some of these stretches throughout the day can help increase flexibility and reduce tension and stress.

### 1. Chest Stretch



Stretching the chest may be one of the best exercises you can do for your body, since most of us spend much of our time hunched forward. This example shows a chest stretch using a resistance band. You can find resistance bands at most sporting goods and department stores and they're great to keep in your desk for quick stretching or strengthening moves. There are alternatives below if you don't have a band.

Do it right: In a seated or standing position, hold the band in a wide grip over the head. Take the arms back just a bit as you lower them down, stretching the chest. Hold for 10-30 seconds. Avoid this move if you have shoulder problems.

## 2. Shoulder Shrugs



The shoulders and neck hold a lot of stress and tension from typing, clicking and scrunching. Shoulder shrugs are a great way to relax the shoulders and get a little circulation going.

Do it right: Seated or standing, lift the shoulders up towards the ears, squeezing them as hard as you can. Hold for 1-2 seconds and roll them back as you relax down. Repeat for 8-10 reps.

## 3. Upper Back Stretch



The upper back can also become tense and tight from hunched shoulders, especially if you hold the phone against your shoulder or use your mouse a lot. The shoulder rolls above may help loosen you up for this upper back stretch.

Do it right: Seated or standing, stretch the arms straight out and rotate the hands so that the palms face away from each other. Cross the arms so that the palms are pressed together, contract the abs and round the back, reaching away as you relax the head. Don't collapse but instead imagine you're curving up and over an imaginary ball. Hold the stretch for 10-30 seconds. If twisting the arms doesn't feel good, simply lace the fingers together.

## 4. Spinal Twist



Sitting for prolonged periods of time can also affect the lower back, leaving it tight and achy. This stretch will help gently work out some of that tension.

Do it right: In a seated position with the feet flat on the floor, contract the abs and gently twist the torso towards the right, using your hands to help deepen the stretch. Only twist as far as you comfortably can and keep the back straight while keeping the hips square. Hold for 10-30 seconds and repeat on the other side.

## 5. Torso Stretch



Even if you pay attention to your posture, you may find yourself sinking back into a hunched position, which can make your back ache. This simple move will stretch all the muscles in your back, sides and arms.

Do it right: Seated or standing, lace the fingers together and stretch them up towards the ceiling. Take a deep breath as you stretch up as high as you can, then exhale and open the arms, sweeping them back down. Repeat for 8-10 reps.

## 6. Forearm Stretch



You may not even realize how tight your forearms can get from typing until you stretch them out. This simple move helps stretch those muscles in the forearms and wrists.

Do it right: Seated or standing, stretch the right arm out and turn the hand down so that the fingers point towards the floor. Use the left hand to gently pull the fingers towards you, feeling a stretch in the forearm. Hold for 10-30 seconds and repeat on the other hand.

## 7. Neck Stretch



Holding tension in the neck can lead to headaches and upper back tension as well. Many of us drop the head forward when working on the computer, which can put extra stress on the neck muscles. This stretch feels great on the neck and shoulders.

Do it right: Sitting in your chair, reach down and grab the side of the chair with the right hand and gently pull while tilting your head to the left, feeling a stretch down the right side of the neck and shoulder. Hold for 10-30 seconds and repeat on the other side.

## 8. Hip Flexor Stretch



The lower body also gets tight from sitting too much, especially the front of the hips. When you sit, the glutes stretch while the hip flexors get tighter. Stretching this area several times a day can help reduce that tightness.

Do it right: While standing, take the right leg back as though you're going to do a lunge. Squeeze the glutes as you bend the knees, lowering down until you feel a stretch in the front of the right hip. Hold for 10-30 seconds and repeat on the other side.

## 9. Seated Hip Stretch



This move helps open up the hips and stretch the complex series of muscles in the hips and glutes.

Do it right: While seated, cross the right ankle over the left knee and sit up nice and tall. Gently lean forward, keeping the back straight and reaching out with the torso until you feel a stretch in the right glute and hip. You can also press down on the right knee to deepen the stretch. Hold for 10-30 seconds and repeat on the other side.

## 10. Inner Thigh Stretch



This not-very-ladylike stretch feels great on the inner thighs, hips and groin and is another hip-opening move that may help get rid of tension and stress in the lower body.

Do it right: While seated, take the legs wide, toes out and lean forward with the elbows on the thighs. Keep the back straight and the abs contracted. Gently press forward while using the elbows to push the thighs out until you feel a stretch in the inner thighs. Hold for 10-30 seconds.