

STRETCHING

Why Stretch?

- Stretching is useful for both injury prevention and injury treatment.
- If done properly, stretching increases flexibility, which directly translates into reduced risk of injury. A muscle/tendon group with a greater range of motion will be less likely to experience tears when used actively.
- Stretching is also thought to improve recovery and may enhance athletic performance.
- Stretching also improves your balance, coordination, and circulation. Stretching increases blood flow to your muscles. Improved circulation can speed recovery after muscle injuries.
- Flexible muscles can improve your daily performance in tasks such as lifting and bending.
- Stretching promotes better posture. Frequent stretching keeps your muscles from getting tight, allowing you to maintain proper posture and minimize aches and pains.
- Stretching can relieve stress. Stretching relaxes the tense muscles that often accompany stress.
- Stretching before work tasks focuses people to working safely.



Stretching Safely

- Stretching is a key part of your exercise program.
- Stretching before your work or physical activity can prepare your body to exercise.
- Stretching after your work promotes better range of motion of your joints.
- When you're stretching:

- Follow the instructions of your medical care provider!
- Stay within your comfort range! Expect to feel some tension while you're stretching. If you feel pain, you've gone too far.
- Move slowly and support your body.
- Hold each stretch for 10-15 seconds.
- Breathe freely as you hold each stretch; try not to hold your breath.

Stretching Essentials

- ✓ **Target major muscle groups.** When you're stretching, focus on your calves, thighs, hips, lower back, neck and shoulders. Also stretch muscles and joints that you routinely use at work or play.
- ✓ **Warm up first.** Stretching muscles when they're cold increases your risk of injury, including pulled muscles. Warm up by walking while gently pumping your arms, or do a favorite exercise at low intensity for five minutes. Better yet, stretch after you exercise — when your muscles are warm and more receptive to stretching.
- ✓ **Know how often to stretch.** As a general rule, stretch before and after a manual task or exercise. If you don't exercise regularly, you might want to stretch at least three times a week to maintain flexibility. If you have a problem area, such as tightness in the back of your leg, you might want to stretch every day or even twice a day.
- ✓ **Know when to exercise caution.** If you have a chronic condition or an injury, you may need to alter your approach to stretching. For example, if you have a strained muscle, stretching it like usual may cause further harm. Discuss the best way to stretch with your medical provider.

Sample Stretches

Pectoral Stretch

- ✓ This stretch is for your chest, shoulders, and upper back.
- ✓ Clasp your hands behind your head.
- ✓ Tuck your chin; press the back of your head into your hands, and press your elbows back.
- ✓ Hold this position for a count of three seconds, relax, and repeat this exercise five times.



Wrist and Finger Extension

- ✓ This stretch is for your wrists and fingers.
- ✓ Clench your hand into a fist; hold this position for three seconds; relax, and repeat this stretch five times on each hand.
- ✓ Now open your hand spreading the fingers as wide as possible; hold this position for three seconds; relax, and repeat this stretch five times on each hand.



Neck Stretch

- ✓ This stretch is for your shoulders and neck.
- ✓ Keep your shoulders and neck in level position. Lean your neck to the left; hold for 10-15 seconds and repeat on the opposite side.



Disk Reliever 1

- ✓ This stretch is for your lower back.
- ✓ Standing up straight with your feet slightly apart, place your hands in the hollow of your back. Support yourself, and use a helper as needed.
- ✓ Focus your eyes on a point straight ahead, and bend slightly backwards without bending your knees.
- ✓ Don't hold this position. Return carefully to the upright position.



Disk Reliever 2

- ✓ This stretch is for your lower back.
- ✓ Standing up straight with your feet slightly apart, place your hands on your side.
- ✓ Support yourself, and use a helper as needed.
- ✓ Stand up straight, and then lean to slightly to the left without bending your knees. Hold this position for about 10-15 seconds. Return carefully to the upright position and repeat on the other side.



Concluding Points for reducing your risk:

- ✓ Correct posture alleviates stress on muscles, tendons and nerves.
- ✓ Take periodic stretch breaks.
- ✓ After work, enjoy activities that use other muscles. Try activities such as swimming and jogging which use different muscles.
- ✓ Your health contributes significantly to your success on and off the job.
- ✓ Our number one goal is to keep you healthy and safe at work.