

#### **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 <u>and</u> support your body.
- Hold each stretch for 10-15 seconds.
- o Breathe freely as you hold each stretch; try not to hold your breath.

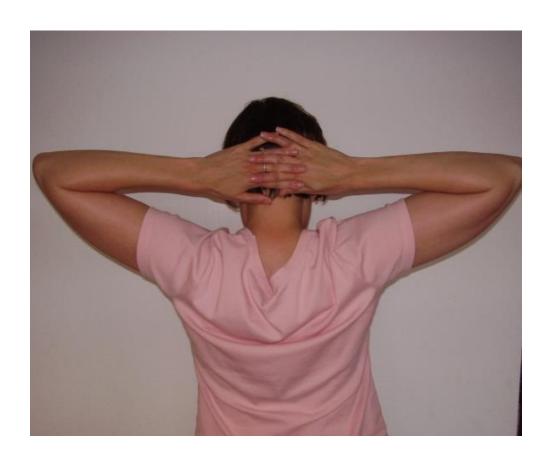
## **Stretching Essentials**

- ✓ 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 <u>slightly</u> 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 <u>slightly</u> 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.