



MnSTEP Flexibility Program



“One STEP closer to an injury-free workplace.”

How to Stretch

Stretch to the best of your ability. It's not a competition; so there is no need to compare your stretching ability to your co-workers'. Stretch by how you feel and not by how far you can go.

Avoid bouncing while stretching. Bouncing can cause trauma in the muscle tissue and can confuse your central nervous system.

Stretch yourself only. Avoid helping others stretch. You know what your limits are when you're stretching and you know when you feel pain. If you assist another person in stretching you may injure them by pushing them too far.

Maintain normal breathing. You shouldn't be holding your breath while you stretch.

Use gentle, controlled motions, while holding each stretch for the proper time period.

Stretch until a mild tension is felt, then relax. **If a stretch feels painful, ease up or stop right away.**

When to Stretch

Stretching is done on paid time; therefore everyone is required to participate to the best of their ability. The only exception to this is if you have a medical reason not to participate.

Stretches are to be done in the morning as a group and individually in the afternoon.

Stretches may also be done throughout the day as needed.


MnSTEP Warm-up

- Keep your back straight.
- Relax your arms at your sides.
- Begin walking in place.
- Swing arms back in forth in opposition to your legs.
- Perform 1 minute of walking warm up before beginning the stretching routine.



Backbend

- Stand with feet shoulder width apart and hands on hips.
- Look straight ahead.
- Slowly and gently bend backwards.
- You should feel tension or compression, not pain in the lower back.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Return to starting position.
- Repeat three times.




Shoulder Rolls

- Stand with back straight and feet shoulder-width apart.
- Elevate shoulders upward toward ears, rotate them backward, down, hold for 5 seconds and then forward in a continuous, circular motion.
- Repeat 5 times.
- Reverse direction.
- Repeat 5 times.



Forward Bend

- *If you have disk problems or experience pain do not do this exercise.
- *Don't compare yourself to others.
- *You may not be able to touch your toes.
- Stand with back straight and feet shoulder-width apart.
- Extend both arms in front of body, parallel to the floor.
- Bend downward toward the floor as far as it is comfortable.
- Hold for five seconds.
- Stand upright. Repeat 5 times.



Standing Leg Stretch

- Stand facing wall, with hands on wall.
- Step forward with foot of uninvolved leg, leaning hips toward wall.
- Keep rear leg straight with heel on floor.
- Hold the stretch for 30 seconds.
- Repeat with the other leg.




Quad Stretch

- Stand on uninvolved leg, using table or chair for balance if you need to.
- Grasp foot of involved leg and gently pull up toward buttocks, pulling the knee backwards.
- Hold the stretch for 30 seconds.
- Repeat with the other leg.




Overhead Stretch

- Stand with back straight and feet shoulder-width apart.
- Reach both arms overhead, clasp the hands, turn the palms upward, and reach as high as possible, trying to elongate the torso.
- Hold for 15 seconds.
- Relax.
- Repeat two more times.




3 Point Neck Stretch

- Keep shoulders relaxed, slowly lower head forward, bring chin to chest.
- Hold; return to starting position.
- Slowly ear to right shoulder. Hold. Return to starting position.
- Repeat holding head to the left shoulder.
- Perform this routine twice holding each position 15-20 seconds.




Chin Tuck

- Sit or stand, looking forward, with good posture.
- Tuck chin in.
- Don't look down.
- Return to starting position.
- Repeat 3 times.




Arm Circles

- Stand with back straight and feet shoulder-width apart.
- Relax with arms at sides.
- Slowly circle left arm forward, upward, and back in a large, continuous circle, thumbs facing upward.
- Repeat 5 times.
- Reverse direction.
- Repeat 5 times
- Change arms and repeat or do both arms simultaneously.




Side Bend

- Stand with back straight and feet placed shoulder-width apart and facing forward.
- Place left arm on left outer thigh for support.
- Extend right arm overhead while moving hips to the left.
- Reach up with right hand as high as possible and bend slightly to the left side until stretch is felt in the waist and up through the shoulder.
- Perform 1 stretch on each side.
- Hold each stretch 30 seconds.



Finger/Hand Stretch

- Stand with back straight and feet shoulder-width apart.
- Extend both arms in front of body, parallel to the floor.
- Make a fist with each hand.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds.
- Open both hands, spreading fingers apart. Hold for 3-5 seconds.
- Repeat 5 times.



Benefits of Stretching

- Warms and prepares muscles for work.
- Increases flexibility & joint range of motion.
- Reduces muscle tension & soreness.
- Improves circulation & posture.
- Reduces anxiety, stress, and fatigue.
- Enhances coordination.
- Improves mental alertness.

Benefits of a Stretching Program

- Reduces the risk of injury.
- Stretching benefits your life off the job.
- Stretches lengthen the muscle tissue making muscles less prone to trauma, tears, and other types of injuries.
- A stretching program helps muscles and tendons recover more quickly from job fatigue.
- **If you have questions about flexibility consult your physician.**



Brought to you by the MnDOT District 3 MnSTEP Flexibility Committee