



# MnSTEP Office Flexibility Program



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

## How Stretching Works

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.

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 there is a medical reason not to participate.

**If you have questions about flexibility consult your physician.**

## How to Stretch

Do 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'.

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

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.

**If a stretch feels painful, ease up or stop right away.**

### 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.



### Head Turn

- Keep shoulders relaxed.
- Turn your head to the side, looking over your shoulder.
- Hold for five seconds; return to starting position.
- Turn your head to the other side, looking over your shoulder.
- Perform this routine 3-5 times.



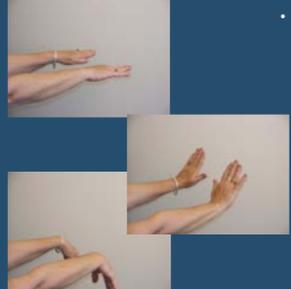
### Finger/Hand Flex

- While standing or sitting....
- Extend both arms in front of body, parallel to the floor.
- Slowly clench fists.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds.
- Open both hands, spreading fingers apart. Hold for 3-5 seconds.
- Repeat 5 times.



### Wrist Flex and Extension

- While sitting or standing...
  - Extend both arms in front of you, with palms facing down.
  - Slowly bend (extend) both wrists so fingers point to the ceiling and hold for five seconds.
  - Next, bend (flex) both wrists so fingers point to the floor and hold for five seconds.
  - Relax and repeat 3-5 times.



### “The Executive”

- While sitting in a chair...
  - Clasp hands behind the head (elbows aligned with ears).
  - Press elbows back as far as possible, squeeze shoulder blades together.
  - Hold for five seconds.
  - Relax and repeat 3 times.



### Upper Back And Arm Stretches

- While standing or sitting in a chair....
  - Interlace your fingers with palms facing away from your body.
  - Straighten your arms.
  - Lift them toward the ceiling.
  - Hold for 15 seconds.
  - Lower them toward the floor.
  - Hold for 15 seconds.
  - Relax.
  - Repeat two more times.



### Shoulder Stretches

- Reach over your head.
- Clasp your fingers together.
- While stretching do side bends.
- Perform 1 stretch on each side.
- Hold each stretch 30 seconds.



### 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.



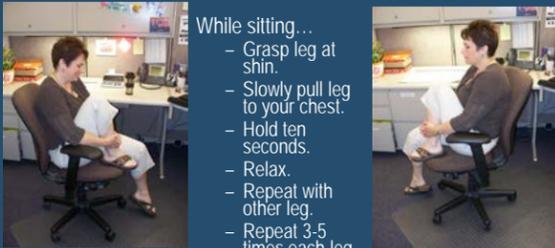
### Backbend

- 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.



### Stretches For The Back

- While sitting...
  - Grasp leg at shin.
  - Slowly pull leg to your chest.
  - Hold ten seconds.
  - Relax.
  - Repeat with other leg.
  - Repeat 3-5 times each leg.



### 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.



### Whole Body Stretch

- While standing with arms at side....
  - Inhale and reach up with both arms.
  - Hold position for five seconds.
  - Relax.
  - Return to starting position and repeat three times.



### Stretches For Vision

- While sitting or standing...
  - Look out a window or as far away from work area as possible.
  - Focus on an object at least 20 feet away.
  - Then move your eyes around and look at other objects.
  - Repeat often throughout the workday.



**Focusing Technique**  
Expected results:  
\*Reduce eyestrain, improve visual comfort and increase efficiency.

### Eye Relaxation

- While sitting in a chair with elbows resting on work surface...
  - Cup hands over eyes, palms resting on cheekbones (avoid applying pressure on your eyeballs).
  - Cross fingers over bridge of nose (shutting out all light).
  - Close eyes for 15 seconds while breathing deeply.
  - Uncover eyes.



**Palming**  
(for eye relaxation)

### 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.
- Reduces the risk of injury.
- Benefits your life off of the job.

*District 3 MnSTEP Flexibility Committee*