

Gentle Stretching

Taking time to stretch once a day has numerous benefits. Stretching eases the tightness of muscles and helps keep your joints flexible. It also promotes better circulation thereby bringing more oxygen and nutrients to your muscles and organs. Finally, stretching can bring a sense of calmness and relaxation by helping reduce the stress hormone cortisol.

When stretching, always be aware of your limits and check with a doctor if you have a physical or medical condition that may be affected. Remember to use your breath—inhaling and exhaling slowly as your stretch. While the following stretches can be done almost anywhere and anytime, take your stretching practice to the next level by setting a time to do them every day or find a “stretching buddy” who will do them with you on a regular basis.

When you are finished stretching, sit (or lay on the floor) quietly for a few moments. Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Take a few deep breaths and exhale slowly before returning to your natural breath.

There are lots of resources, articles, and videos online. Here are a few basic stretching routines:

Mayo Clinic Guide to Stretches

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/multimedia/stretching/sls-20076840>

10-Minute Stretching Sequence from Fitbit

<https://blog.fitbit.com/daily-stretching-sequence/>

10 Simple Yoga Poses that Help Everyone at Any Age from the Yoga Journal

<https://www.yogajournal.com/poses/10-simple-yoga-poses-that-help-everyone-at-any-age#gid=ci02228525500026fe&pid=03-tadasana>

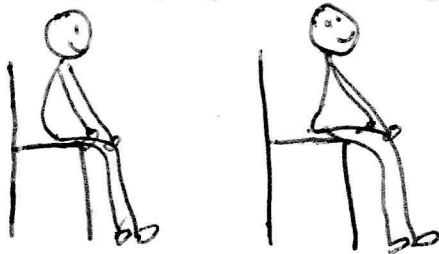
Spine Stretch #1

Sit with both feet on the ground. Place your left hand on your right knee and your right hand behind you on the seat. Inhale and twist your torso slightly to the right. Repeat on the other side with your right hand on your left knee and left hand behind you.



Spine Stretch #2

Sit slightly forward in a chair with your hands on your knees. Bend forward slightly so your spine forms a "C" and your eyes gaze at the floor. Gently move your spine in the opposite direction so your eyes gaze at the ceiling.

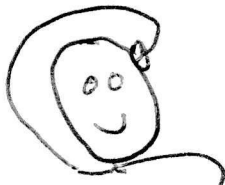


Shoulder Stretch

Roll your shoulders back gently as you inhale and exhale. Do this motion 3-5 times then reverse direction and do the same number of rolls.

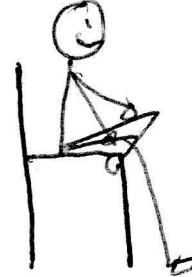
Neck Stretch

Sitting straight in your chair, bend your head slightly towards your right shoulder (keeping the shoulders level and without leaning your body to the right). Reaching up and over, place your right hand on the left side of your head and gently apply pressure. Release and repeat on the other side.



Hip Stretch

Sitting in your chair, cross your right ankle just above your left knee. Use your right hand to gently press your right knee so you feel the stretch in your hip. If you can, lean forward slightly keeping your spine flat and shoulders relaxed.



Hamstring Stretch

Sit at the front edge of your seat and feet flat on the floor. Place your right foot forward so the leg is stretched. Keeping your spine straight, reach for your toes with your right hand—or rest your hand on your thigh or knee—keeping the left hand on the left knee. Relax and take a few breaths then switch sides.



Standing Stretch

Stand tall and notice the position of your shoulders. Are you leaning forward? Backwards? Gaze in front of you. Raise the arms overhead stretching the arms then moving the shoulders slightly back, then forward...and then moving the torso gently to the right and to the left.

