

Desk Exercise Made Easy

Sitting for long periods of time and performing repetitive movements, often associated with a "desk job", can cause stiffness and pain in the muscles and joints. Over time, this stiffness and pain can result in a serious, debilitating injury. One of the most effective ways to reduce muscle strain and tension in the workplace is to stretch and strength train at your desk. If you have 10 minutes, you have enough time for a quick workout!

Hold each stretch 10-20 seconds, and repeat 2-3 times

Head and Neck
1. Gently drop your chin to your chest, then look up at the ceiling (as if you were nodding a big "yes")
2. Look over your left shoulder, look over your right shoulder (as if you were shaking your head "no")
3. Gently drop your ear to your shoulder (as if you were listening to your shoulder - don't lift the shoulder, instead lower your ear). Switch to other side.
Shoulders/Chest
1. Shrug your shoulders up high, hold for 10 seconds, and relax.
2. Roll your shoulders forward, then backwards.
3. Take your right arm across your body, holding just above the elbow. Try to keep your shoulder pressed down and neck elongated as you give your shoulder a gentle squeeze. Switch arms.
4. Clasp your hands behind you and gently stretch your chest forward.
Arms and Wrists
1. Take your right arm overhead, bend at the elbow, and try to touch your left shoulder. Use your left arm to apply gentle pressure just above the elbow joint, pulling the elbow into your body. Hold for 10 seconds. Switch arms.
2. Roll your wrists clockwise.
3. Roll your wrists counter-clockwise.
4. Spell your name in the air with your wrists.
Torso/Spine
1. While sitting up nice and tall in your chair, gently rotate to your left and grasp the back of your chair as you gently pull yourself to the back of the room. Let your head naturally follow the rotation. Hold for 10 seconds, repeat on the other side.
2. While sitting in your chair, round forward so that your chest is on your knees. Wrap your arms around your legs and give them a gentle hug.
Quadriceps
1. Stand up and sit down in your chair without using your arms. Do 8-10 repetitions.
2. Extend your right leg out in front of you. Keeping your foot off the ground, bend at the knee, then slowly straighten your leg and repeat 10 times. Repeat on left leg.

Hamstrings

1. Sit on the edge of your chair (make sure the chair is not going to roll!), extend both legs out in front of you. Keep your knees straight and flex your feet (pull your toes towards your knees) Slowly reach toward your toes, keeping your back flat. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds. Repeat, trying to reach a little further each time.

Calves

1. Standing up, place your palms on your desk and take a step back with your right leg. Bend the left knee as it is comfortable. Press the heel of your right foot into the ground. Hold for 10 seconds. Switch legs.

2. Do a set of calf raises. From a standing position, press up onto the balls of your feet, distributing your weight evenly through your toes. Try to raise straight up, do not allow your ankles to roll outward. Use your desk or a chair for support if necessary. Hold for 5 seconds. Lower and repeat.

Ankles/Feet

1. Roll your ankles clockwise

2. Roll your ankles counter-clockwise

3. Spell your name in the air with your ankles

4. Flex your feet, pulling your toes up towards your knees

5. Point your toes away from your body

Additional Desk Exercises

You can exercise every muscle group at your desk with little or no equipment. Keep a set of light hand weights (3-10 lbs.) at your desk to "sneak" in strength training exercises. Here are a few suggested exercises, aim for 3 sets of 10-12 repetitions, 3 days per week.

Chair Squat (Quadriceps/Gluteals)

1. Stand up and sit down in your chair without using your hands. Progress to barely touching the seat with your rear end and/or holding the hand weights at your sides for extra resistance.

Standing Leg Curl (Hamstrings)

1. While standing (use a chair for support if necessary), extend one leg behind you. Flex your foot and bend your knee, bringing your heel up towards your rear end. Squeeze at the top before lowering the leg.

Low Row (Back)

1. Stand with feet shoulder width apart holding hand weights at your sides. Bend the knees slightly and keeping your back flat, hinge forward at the hip to about a 45 degree angle. Allow your arms to naturally fall forward. Keep your palms facing each other and pull your elbows back, bringing the weights toward your chest. Concentrate on squeezing your shoulder blades together. Hold for a count, lower and repeat.

Desk Push-Ups (Chest)

1. Position yourself in a plank position, hands slightly wider than shoulders on the edge of your desk. Keep abdominals pulled in to support lower back.
2. Slowly bend at the elbows, and lower your nose toward your desk.
3. Push back up to start, and repeat.

Overhead Press (Shoulders)

1. Stand with feet shoulder width apart, holding hand weights on shoulders
2. Press the dumbbells over your head, palms facing each other.
3. Keep your shoulders down and neck elongated as you press up.
4. Lower the dumbbells back to your shoulders and repeat movement.

Biceps Curls (Biceps)

1. Stand with feet shoulder width apart, weights resting at your thighs, palms facing up.
2. Remember to keep your knees slightly bent and abdominals tight to support the lower back.
3. Curl the weights into your chest, squeezing your biceps muscles- stop right before you reach the top of the range of motion. Keep your elbows stationary (do not swing). Hold for a count, lower and repeat.

Triceps kickbacks (Triceps)

1. Standing with your feet together and weights to your sides, step your right leg out into a lunge position. Bring the weights up and into your armpits- keeping your elbows squeezed in and shoulder blades together. Position your torso so that you are leaning slightly forward, into the lunging leg.
2. Keeping your elbows high, extend your arms out behind you, keeping the palms facing each other. Hold for a count, bring the arms back in. Repeat. Then switch legs and repeat.

Crunches (Abdominals)

1. Lay on floor with your feet shoulder width apart and hands clasped behind your head.
2. Use your abdominal muscles and crunch inward, raising your head and chest off the floor, while keeping your eyes fixed on the ceiling. Do not pull on your neck. Squeeze the abdominals as you contract. Hold for a count, relax to starting position, and repeat.