

Everyday Healthy SERIES



Stretches to do at your desk (Jackie McLarnon)

After long periods of sitting, your muscles can become tight and shortened. This can, over time, cause postural problems including back pain. Frequent stretching can improve your flexibility and help you relax.

Ideally, stretching should be done with warm muscles, lengthened to the point of mild tension and held for 10-30 seconds. Slow, deep breathing will also assist your stretch.

1. *Hamstring stretch:* your hamstrings are the muscles located at the back of your thigh. They are often tight and have been known to cause low back pain in some cases. Sit tall at the edge of your chair with your feet on the floor and knees bent. Extend your right leg so that the knee is straight and your heel rests on the floor. Keeping your spine tall and straight, lean forward towards your right leg until you feel mild tension in the hamstrings. Hold the position 10-30 seconds. Repeat on left leg.
2. *Glute stretch:* Start as in the previous stretch sitting tall at the edge of your chair. Place your right ankle on top of your left knee. Allow your right knee to fall to the right until you feel mild tension. If this feels very comfortable, increase the stretch by sitting tall and leaning forwards.

2/...

3. *Chest stretch:* sitting tall in your chair with your chest lifted, extend your arms out to the side like you're making the letter 'T'. Gently bend the elbows as if you want to put them into your back pockets. Hold.
4. *Neck stretch:* Sitting tall in your chair, extend your neck as though you have a string tied to the top of your head and it is being pulled up to the ceiling. Slowly lean your right ear towards your right shoulder. Hold. From that position, slowly turn your chin towards your right armpit. Hold. Repeat on the other side.
5. *Quad stretch:* stand in front of your chair holding onto something to help your balance (like the edge of your desk). Place the front of your right foot on your chair. Stand tall and squeeze your glute muscles until you feel mild tension in the front of your thigh. Hold. Repeat with left leg.
6. *Hip flexors:* after completing the quad stretch, keep your foot on the chair but either move the chair back or your body forward pulling your leg behind you. This stretch should be felt at the front of your hip.

Our Mind/Body classes include a great deal of flexibility training. The classes are offered 10 times per week at various times of the day.

(a combined hip flexor and chest/shoulder stretch)

