

Exercises for Computer Users

When working on a computer it is important to take frequent breaks and change how you are using muscles in your upper extremities.

Stretching your fingers, hands, shoulders, and neck muscles help maintain their normal range of motion. When you use a muscle, you contract it. When it is contracted, it is shorter and firmer, which decreases the circulation to that muscle. When a muscle is strained and tight, it stays in this shortened state until you relax it back to its normal state. Stretching and lengthening a muscle can help it to keep healthy. Contracting muscles that you do not use frequently helps keep a balance between your muscles.

Do these exercises throughout the day to help you remove the muscle strain that is accumulating in your body.

Keys to doing these stretches properly

- Perform the stretches slowly and gently.
- Hold the position for just a few seconds. Relax between repetitions.
- Every exercise should feel good.
- You should feel a pleasant pull, never pain.
- If you feel any sensation of discomfort, no matter how slight, stop.
- Try the exercise again, only this time do it slower and do not stretch as far.

Neck range of motion

Head Tilts

1. Sit straight in your chair with your head in neutral position (Figure A).
2. Bring your ear to your shoulder without turning your head or lifting your shoulder (Figure B).
3. Hold for a count of five.
4. Reverse direction (Figure C).
5. Repeat five times.



Figure A



Figure B



Figure C

Head Turns

1. Start with your head in neutral.
2. Without moving your chest or upper back look all the way to the right (Figure D).
3. Then look all the way to the left (Figure E).
4. Repeat slowly five times.



Figure D



Figure E

Standing Back Bend

1. Stand with palms flat against the back of your hips, fingers pointing downward.
2. Gently lean back without causing pain.
3. Hold for three seconds.
4. Relax and repeat 6 to 8 times.



Elbow into Back Pockets

1. Stand or sit erect in a chair.
2. Lift both palms up as if you were gesturing to stop traffic.
3. Move your elbows towards the back and downward, as if you were trying to tuck them into your back pockets. Your palms should be turned away from you. Don't start arching your spine! Keep your chin tucked in.
4. Hold for about 10 seconds. Do often throughout the day.



Flowing Exercises of Shoulders, Elbows and Wrists

The next three exercises will help improve circulation in your wrists, arms and shoulders. When you use your arms in one position for a long time, your circulation cannot keep up with the need of your working tissue. Your body gives you warning signs of coldness, stiffness and sometimes tightness in the hands and arms.

You may feel like you want to shake the hands to make them feel better. Instead of shaking the hands, it is better to do gentle motions that will improve your circulation without putting additional stress on the muscles and tendons.

These gentle motions should be done smoothly within a pain free range.

Pay attention to your body's response; your arms should feel warmer and more relaxed. If they feel worse, you were either too vigorous or placed your arms in a position that was uncomfortable to begin the flowing motion.

You can adapt the following exercise to fit your needs. These exercises are simply a starting point.

Shoulder

1. Relax your elbows so they are bent with your forearms at your side and your palms towards your body.
2. From this position move your arms out to the side using your shoulder (like wings).
3. Repeat 6 to 8 times.



Elbow

1. Leave your wrists relaxed and bend your elbows so that your forearms are at your side with the palm's turned up.
2. From this position, gently bend and straighten your elbow part way.
3. Repeat 6 to 8 times.



Wrist

1. Place your arms at your side, then gently wave your wrists back and forth.
2. Repeat 6 to 8 times.



Open and Close Hand

1. Make fist slowly with your thumb on the outside.
2. Open your hand slowly and spread your fingers.
3. Relax and repeat 6 to 8 times.

