Stretches for Healthcare Workers



INTRODUCTION

Before beginning any stretching program, check with your healthcare provider. If you question any of the following stretches, or feel any discomfort while doing any of these stretches, stop and check with your healthcare provider before continuing.

You may notice that working for long periods of time, without taking a short break, may cause you to feel some discomfort. When you first feel discomfort, stop what you are doing and take a few minutes to do the stretches described in this pamphlet. Each of these stretches focuses on a specific part of the body – the neck and shoulders, the elbows, the forearms, and the hands and wrists. Each stretch should be done **s-l-o-w-l-y** and gently. The benefits are well worth the few minutes it takes out of your workday.

TRUNK AND LOW BACK

Sidebend

- Feet shoulder width apart, arms at sides.
- With one hand, reach up overhead and **s-l-o-w-l-y** lean towards opposite side. Keep both feet flat on ground.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds.
- Return to starting position and repeat twice on each side.

Backbend

- Feet shoulder width apart, hands on hips.
- Looking straight ahead (don’t throw your head back) **s-l-o-w-l-y** and gently bend backwards.
- Caution – You should feel tension, not pain, in the low back.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds, but don’t hold your breath.
- Return to starting position and repeat three times.

UPPER BODY

Chest and Shoulder Stretch

- Standing up straight, raise your arms with your elbows bent so that your upper arms are parallel to the floor, fingers pointing up.
- **S-l-o-w-l-y** squeeze your shoulder blades together and hold for 3-5 seconds.
- Return to the starting position and repeat three times.

Forearm Stretch

- Hold your arms out straight in front of you with your palms facing down.
- Make a loose fist with your hands.
- **S-l-o-w-l-y** and gently bend your fists down towards the floor. Your knuckles should be pointing towards the floor.
- Now **s-l-o-w-l-y** and gently rotate your fists toward the little finger side of your hand.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds. You should feel a stretch from the topside of the wrists up to the elbow.
- Relax and shake out your hands and arms.
- Repeat this stretch three times.

Open Hand Stretch

- Start with your hands in a loose fist position.
- **S-l-o-w-l-y** open your hands and extend your fingers.
- Return to a loose fist position and repeat three times.

LEGS

Hamstring Stretch

- Raise your foot on an elevated surface, at least 10” to 12” high. A step stool or the bottom shelf of a locked rolling cart works.
- Looking forward, **s-l-o-w-l-y** bend at hip, keeping raised leg straight.
- Stop when you feel tension and hold 3-5 seconds.
- To increase tension, pull toes towards face.
- Switch legs and repeat stretch. Do each leg twice.

Quadriceps Stretch

- Holding on for balance with your right hand, grab your left foot or ankle with your left hand.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds and feel the pull in the front of your thigh.
- Repeat on opposite side. Do each leg twice.