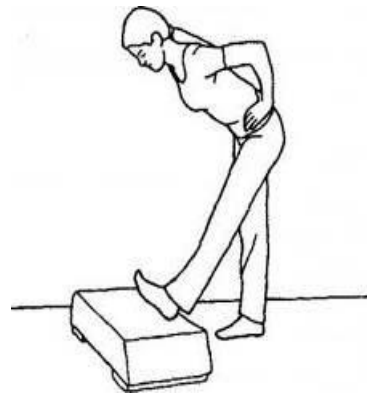




# Office Stretching - Exercises You Can Do at Work

## Training Materials:

1. No Sweat Computer Fitness
2. Exercising at the Start of Work
3. Stress Reducing Office Maneuvers
4. Preventing and Relieving Carpal Tunnel Syndrome



*Presented by:*  
**NYS Public Employees Federation**  
**Occupational Health & Safety Department**  
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[www.pef.org](http://www.pef.org)



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# NO SWEAT COMPUTER FITNESS

## EXERCISES AT THE WORKPLACE

Take a one minute mini-break each hour during your workday to do a few of these easy exercises- right in your workplace. They'll loosen up your muscles, keep you more alert, and make a big difference in how you work and feel!

### Neck Exercises

- **Head Nods (Flexion)**- "Yes" motion
- **Head Tilts (side bending)**- Bring ear to shoulder
- **Head Rotation**- Turn head to the left, back to center, then to the right
- **Double Chin**- Bring chin to back (retract)



Figure 1: Double Chin

### Eye Exercises

- **Eyes in a Box**- Look up, to the right, down, to the left, then back up, repeat in the opposite direction.
- **Yoga Clock**- Imagine a clock, move your eyes from the center of the clock to the 1, then back to the center and then to the 2, continue to do this clockwise all the way around the clock. Then do the same counter clockwise.
- **Palm your Eyes**- Lean your elbows on your desk; cup your hands and place them lightly over your closed eyes. Hold for a minute, while breathing deeply in and out.
- **Look Away**- Every half- hour, look away from the computer screen and focus for 10-15 seconds on an object at least 20 feet away.

### Shoulder Exercises

- **Shoulder Rolls**- Lift shoulders up, in a smooth motion roll them forward, then down, then back, and up again. Repeat four or five times. Go in opposite direction by lifting up, roll back, then down, then forward, then up.
- **Shoulder Shrugs**- Lift Shoulders up towards the ears, hold for 5-10 seconds. Then release.



Figure 2: Shoulder Rolls

### Arm Exercises

- **Arm Stretch**- Interlace fingers, turn palms, straighten arms out in front, then upwards.
- **Forearm Stretches**- You can integrate your desk: stand up place your hands (fingers up or down) on your desk. Lean forward and stretch.



Figure 3: Arm Stretch

## Hand Exercises

- **Wrist Rotating**- Rotate palm up and down.
- **Wrist Circles**- Make circles with fingers.
- **Wrist Shaking**- Shake up and down, then sideways.
- **Finger Stretch**- Spread fingers.
- **Thumb Stretch**- Pull back your thumb, pull it towards your palm.

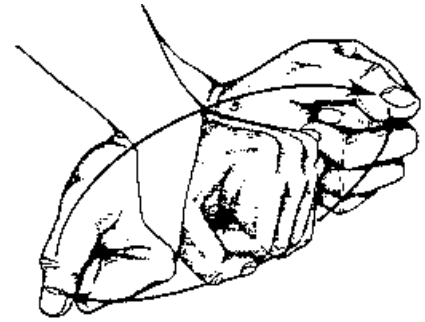


Figure 4: Wrist Circles

## Back Exercises

- **Flexion in Standing**- Roll body towards knees- you can also start this exercise from a sitting position.
- **Disc Reliever**- Bend upper body backwards in a standing position; hands support the hollow of your back.
- **Elbow Press**- Press elbows backward in chest height.
- **Stretch Up**- Sit up straight and imagine you have a cable attached to the top of your head. Feel the cable slowly pull you up higher and higher. Hold for a few seconds. Relax.
- **Chair Back Stretch**- Lean forward to stretch, keep your head down and your neck relaxed, hold 10-20 seconds, and use your hands to push yourself upright.
- **Standing Back Stretch**- Stand with hands on your hips keeping your knees slightly flexed, gently turn your torso at the waist and look over your shoulder until you feel the stretch and hold 8-10 seconds. Repeat other side.

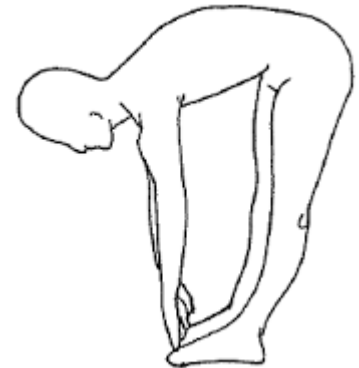


Figure 5: Flexion in Standing



Figure 6: Tip and Heel or Ankle Pumps

## Leg and Feet Exercises

Exercises for while you are sitting on your chair:

- **Swivel**- Rotate ankle clockwise. Repeat counter-clockwise.
- **Tip and Heel (Ankle Pump)**- Point with tip of toes and heels on the floor.
- **Upper Leg Stretch**- Stretch while you are sitting on your chair.

Exercises from a standing position:

- **Up and Down**- Stand next to your desk and slowly lift up on the tips of your toes several times.
- **Calf stretch and Achilles Stretch**- Stretch while hands lean on desk.

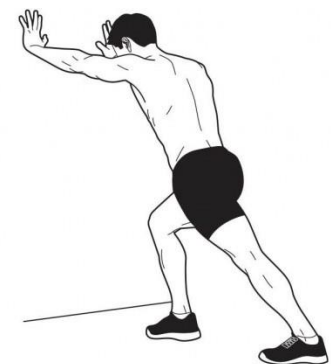


Figure 7: Calf Stretch

# Exercising at the start of work, during breaks helps prevent carpal tunnel syndrome

A team of orthopedic surgeons has developed special exercises that can help prevent carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS). The exercises, which should be done at the start of each work shift and after each break, decrease the median nerve pressure responsible for CTS.

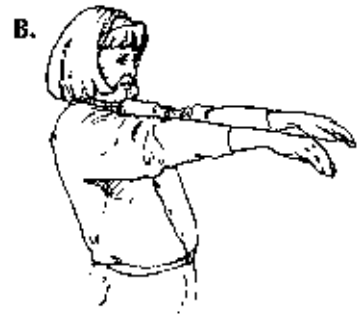
Dr. Seradge said that workers with hand-intensive jobs should do five-minute exercise warm-up before starting work, just as runners stretch before a run to prevent injury.

The exercises are:

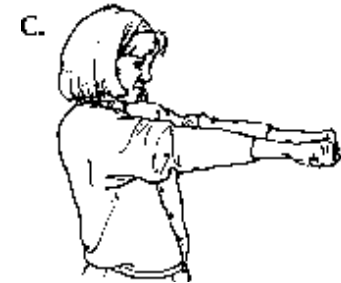
a. Extend and stretch both wrists and fingers acutely as if they are in a hand-stand position. Hold for a count of 5.



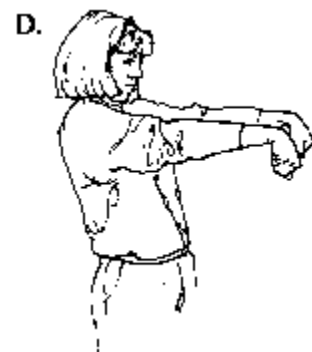
b. Straighten both wrists and relax fingers.



c. Make a tight fist with both hands



d. Then bend both wrists down while keeping the fist. Hold for a count of 5.



e. Straighten both wrists and relax fingers for a count of 5.



f. The exercise should be repeated 10 times. Then workers should let their arms hang loosely at their side and shake them for a couple of seconds.



Depending on the type of work, employees should also do a slow isometric and isotonic exercise for posturing and toning of neck and arms, Dr. Seradge said.

In addition to keyboard operators, factory workers, and typists, also at risk for carpal tunnel syndrome are workers whose jobs require holding actions, such as barbers and bus drives.

“In the long run, daily exercises, combined with job modification, will save employers money that they would have had to spend on carpal tunnel syndrome surgery for workers,” said Dr. Seradge.

Co-authors of the study with Dr. Seradge are Medhi N. Adham, MD, and Wilafred L. Parker, P.A., both of Oklahoma City.

*Source: Poser exhibit D-29, annual meeting, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, Feb. 25, 1996*

# STRESS-REDUCING OFFICE MANEUVERS

Performing this 5-minute stretching routine twice each day helps reduce stress and ease muscle tension

Wondering why your back is sore again? Can't figure out how you got that crick in your neck? You are not alone. Millions of Americans who suffer from back and neck pain are unable to identify a specific incident as the root of their discomfort. Surprisingly, it doesn't take bungy jumping, slipping on icy stairs, or moving a piano to bring on a backache. In fact, one of the most common causes of back and neck problems is simply doing too much of nothing at all.

"Many of us associate back and neck injuries with occupations that require heavy lifting and other strenuous tasks" says CINN occupational therapist Monika Robinson. "But sedentary jobs that necessitate sitting at a desk or computer terminal for extended lengths of time can also be very hard on your body. This type of sustained positioning can lead to constant muscle tension, joint strains, permanent muscle shortening, decreased circulation, and other damaging conditions that contribute to back and neck pain."

Are those of us who make a living glued to an office chair hour after hour, day after day destined for bad backs? "Absolutely not," says CINN physical therapist and Corporate Ergonomics Coordinator Elke Friedman. "You can counteract the negative effects of prolonged sitting by breaking up your day with brief, but frequent periods of activity."

Fortunately, you don't have to don sweats and gear up for a long workout to heed CINN's advice. The Institution recommends performing the following 5-minute series of stretches twice a day and supplementing this quick routine with hourly strolls around the office. Stretching, coupled with a minute or two of upright movement each hour, helps reduce stress, ease muscle tension and strain, improve circulation, and relieve pain.

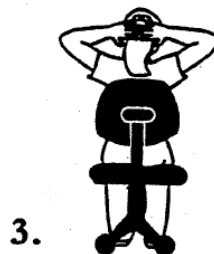
"Exercise alone won't always cure a serious back or neck ailment," cautions Elke. "If you are experiencing severe or persistent pain, you should consult a physician." However, if you are regularly bothered by twinges of discomfort, our stretches can help ward off these annoying episodes and keep you feeling great.



Reaching behind your back, clasp your fingers together with your palms facing in. Slowly rise and straighten your arms. Hold this position for several seconds, then slowly release. Repeat three times.



Raise your elbows while keeping your hips stationary. Twist your upper body at the waist to the right. Hold this position for several seconds then repeat on your left side. Repeat this stretch on each side three times.



Place your fingers behind your head and squeeze your shoulder blades together until you feel tension through your upper back, then slowly release. Repeat three times.



Stretch your right arm across your body. With your left arm pull your right elbow towards your left shoulder. Hold this position for several seconds, and then reverse arms. Repeat three times.



5.

Clasp your hands together above your head. While stretching your hands upward, slowly lean to the right side, then to the left. Do not arch your back, keep your knees slightly bent. Repeat three times.



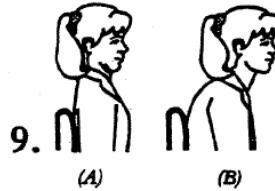
8.

Bring your right hand to your upper back from above while bringing your left hand to your upper back from below. Slowly move your hands as close together as possible and hold. Release after several seconds, then reverse arms. Repeat three times.



6.

Leans against a support with your right leg forward and your left leg back. Your right leg should be bent and your left leg should be straight. With the heel of your left leg on the floor, slowly move your hips forward until you feel a stretch in your left calf. Hold for thirty seconds before releasing, and then reverse legs. Repeat three times.

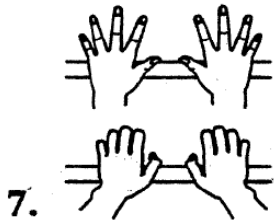


9.

(A)

(B)

Tuck your chin in slowly (A). Hold this position for two seconds, then release. This exercise counteracts the effects of leaning forward to stare at a computer monitor (B).



7.

Extend and separate your fingers until you feel the stretch. Hold this position for 5 seconds. Relax, then gently bend your fingers.



10.

Sit up straight and extend your legs out from your body. Hold this position for several seconds, then release. Repeat three times.

*If you have any questions about the exercises on this sheet, please call a CINN ergonomics consultant at (312) 883-8558.*

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## Preventing and Relieving Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

According to one survey, nearly two million American workers have symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome. The disabling condition often stems from long hours typing, driving, working on an assembly line, or performing other repetitive hand movements. Those activities can compress a nerve in the wrist, causing discomfort and weakness in the hand. In severe cases the hand may stop functioning altogether. But there are simple steps you can take to prevent the syndrome from occurring – and, in mild cases, to reverse existing damage before it becomes permanent.

Surgeons at The Hand Institute of the Orthopedic & Reconstructive Center in Oklahoma City have developed a set of 13 special exercises designed to relieve nerve pressure in the wrist. The six shown here provide a well-rounded sample. (To send for the full program, see side note at right.) If you think you may be susceptible to carpal tunnel syndrome, do the exercises three times a day – before and after work, and once midday. (Other factors that increase the risk of developing the syndrome include: arthritis, diabetes, hypothyroidism, obesity, pregnancy, and prior fractures in the wrist.)

More preventative tips:

- ❑ If you work at a keyboard, type with your wrists in a neutral position – not bent up or down. You can find a variety of wrist supports for that purpose in any office-supply store.
- ❑ Adjust your office chair so you can sit in a “90-90-90” position: With your feet planted on the

floor, there should be a 90-degree angle between your lower leg and your upper leg (at the knee), between your upper leg and your back (at the hip), and between your upper arm and your lower arm (at the elbow).

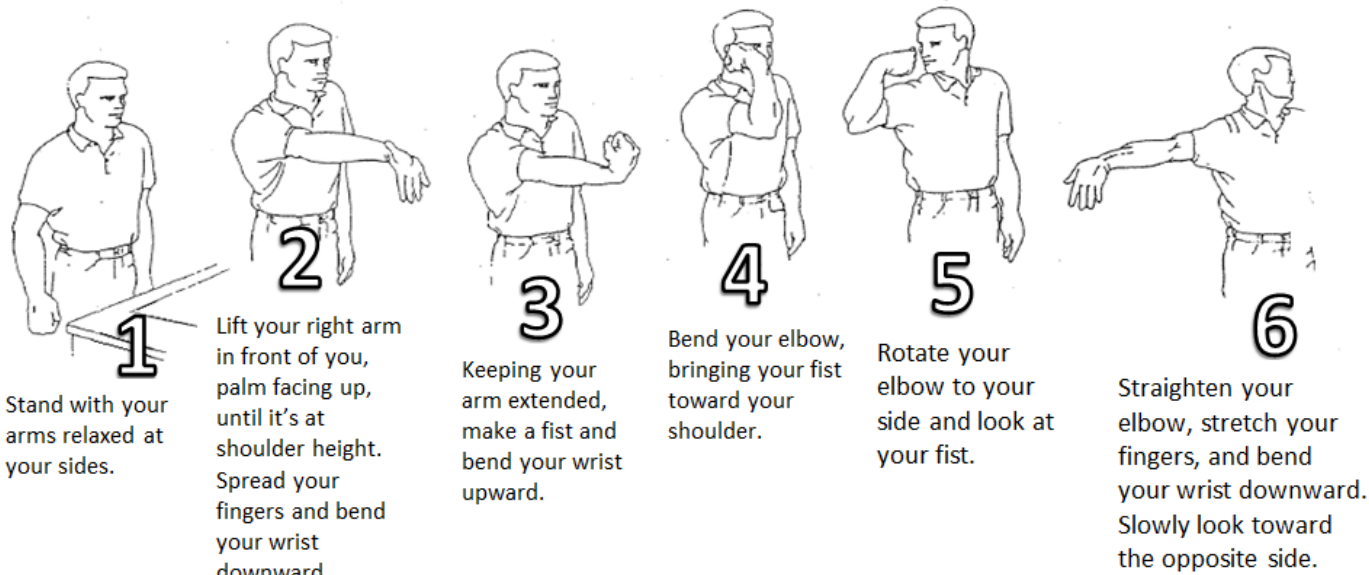
- ❑ If you frequently use vibrating power tools, such as a power sander or chain saw, put shock absorbers on the handles.
- ❑ If you must hold anything for long periods of time – a hand tool, a steering wheel, a pencil – relax your grip on the object and hold it loosely whenever possible.
- ❑ Rest your hands at least once a hour – especially if your work is highly repetitive.

If despite all those measures, you feel pain, numbness, or tingling in your fingers for more than a couple of days, consult a doctor about doing more intense exercises, wearing a wrist splint (usually at night), taking anti-inflammatory drugs, or getting cortisone injections. If those steps fail, surgery can usually erase symptoms within a month – although it can take three months to regain even reduced hand strength you had before surgery and two years to become markedly stronger.

### *For more information*

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome exercise program. Send self-addressed, stamped envelopes to Houshang Seradga, M.D., Orthopedic & Reconstructive Center, 1044 S. W. 44<sup>th</sup> St., 6<sup>th</sup> floor, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73109

**Hold each for a count of 10 seconds. Repeat steps 1-6 with both arms.**



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