

Get Active!

Stretch It Out!



Benefits of Stretching

Standing or sitting for long periods of time can take a toll on your muscles. When performed properly, regular stretching can offer many benefits, including:

- Increased blood flow to muscles
- Reduced stiffness and pain
- Improved flexibility and joint range of motion
- Improved athletic performance
- Reduced risk of injury

Safe Stretching

- Always consult your healthcare provider before beginning a new stretching and/or exercise regimen.
- Before beginning stretching, make sure you know how to do it safely and effectively.
- You can stretch anytime, anywhere—just be sure to use proper technique.
- If you have a chronic condition or an injury, you might need to adjust your stretching technique.
 - For example, if you already have a strained muscle, stretching it may cause greater injury.
- **Stretching incorrectly can actually do more harm than good!**

Tips for Safe Stretching

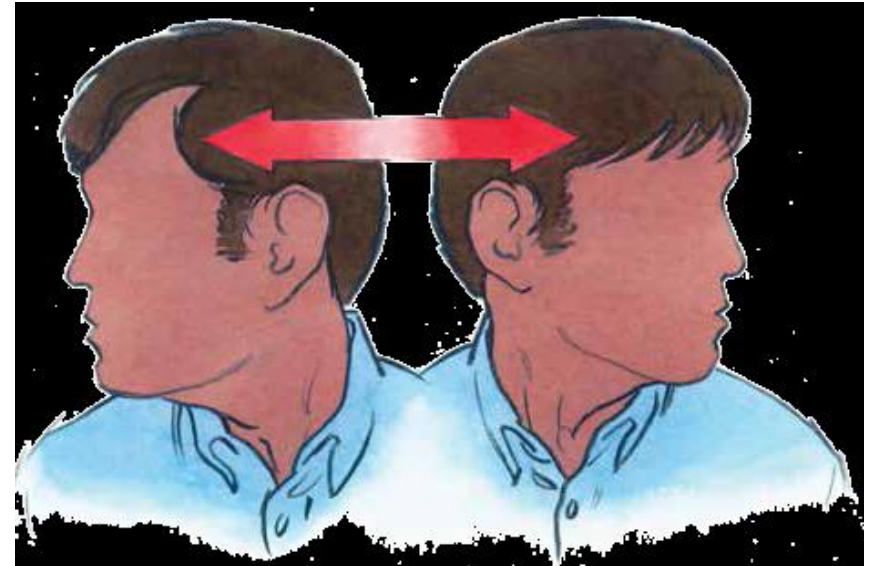
- **Warm up** – Before beginning stretching, warm up your muscles with walking, light jogging, or another low-intensity activity.
- **Strive for symmetry** – Focus on having equal flexibility side to side.
- **Focus on major muscle groups** – Concentrate your stretches on major muscle groups like calves, thighs, hips, lower back, neck, and shoulders.
- **Don't bounce** – Stretch in smooth movements to avoid muscle injury.
- **Hold your stretch** – Hold each stretch for 15-30 seconds; for problem areas, you may want to hold for 60 seconds.
- **Don't aim for pain** – You should feel tension—not pain—while stretching; back off if your stretch hurts.
- **Remember to breathe** – Inhale and exhale slowly as you stretch.

Stretch It Out

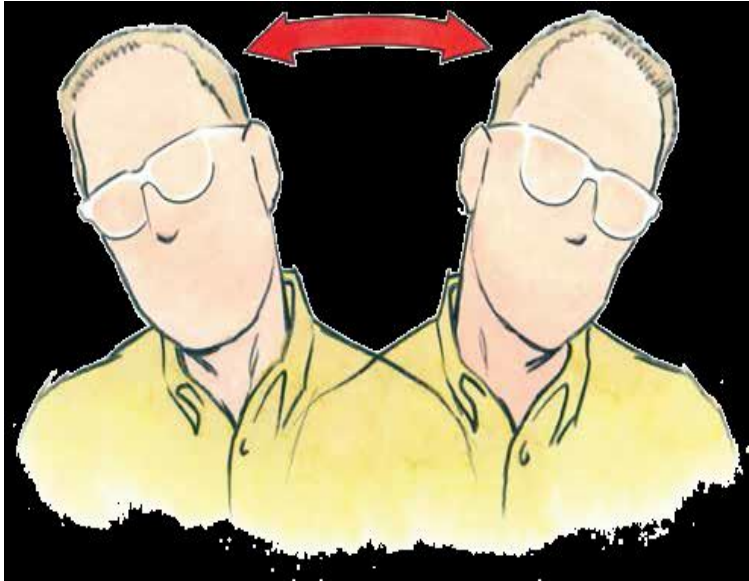
- Perform simple stretches throughout the day to help keep your muscles from feeling sore and tight.
- Aim for 3-5 reps of your stretch per each stretching session.
- **Remember: Always consult your healthcare provider before beginning a new stretching regimen.**
- Try starting out with some of the following stretching suggestions!

Head Turn

- Face straight ahead.
- Turn your head to one side while keeping your shoulders straight.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds. You should feel tension in the side of your neck and your shoulder.
- Relax and slowly return to starting position.
- Turn your head to opposite side and repeat.



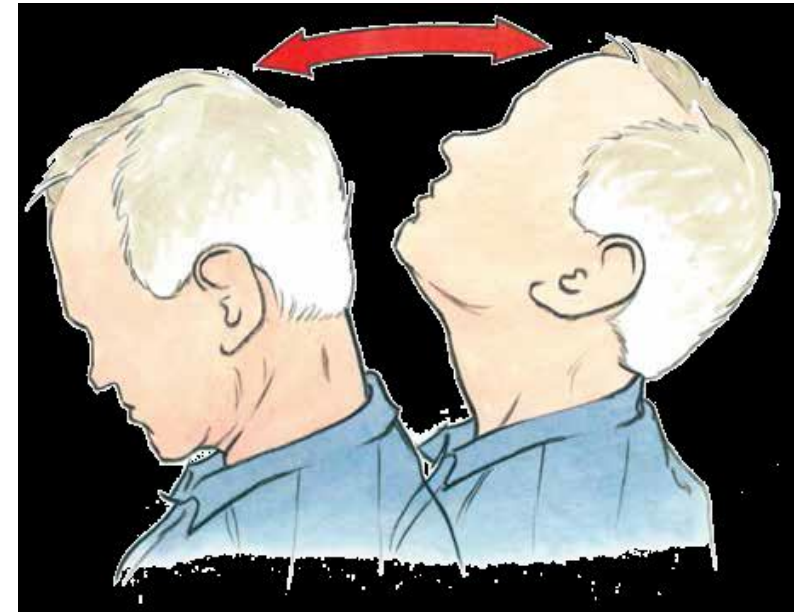
Side Neck Stretch



- Face straight ahead.
- Tilt your head so you are moving your ear toward your shoulder, but don't bring your shoulder up to your ear.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds. You should feel tension in the side of your neck.
- Relax and slowly return to starting position.
- Tilt your head to opposite side and repeat.

Chin Tuck

- Face straight ahead.
- Lower your chin to your chest.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds. You should feel tension in the back of your neck.
- Relax and slowly return to the starting position.
- Repeat.

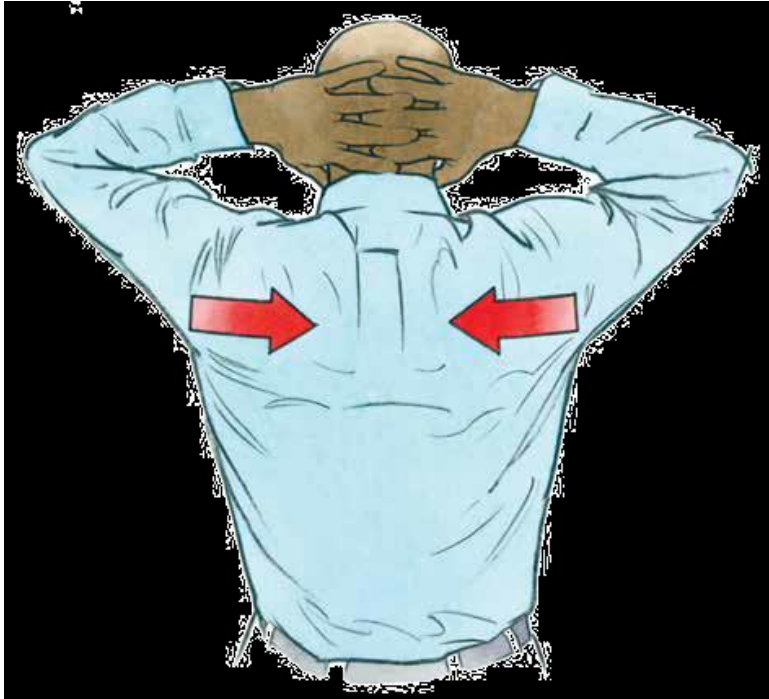


Shoulder Roll



- Start in a seated or standing position.
- You can perform one arm at a time or both at the same time.
- Be sure your neck is aligned with your spine and your head directly over the center of your shoulders throughout.
- Roll your shoulders forward 5 times, then backward 5 times.
- Finish by shrugging your shoulders up to your ears and back down 5 times.

Chest Stretch



- Place your hands behind your head.
- Squeeze your shoulder blades together, bringing your elbows back as far as possible.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds.
- Relax and slowly return to the starting position.
- Repeat.

Upper Arm Stretch

- Lift one arm and bend it behind your head.
- Place your other hand on the bent elbow to help stretch your upper arm and shoulder.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds.
- Relax and slowly return to the starting position.
- Repeat with opposite arm.



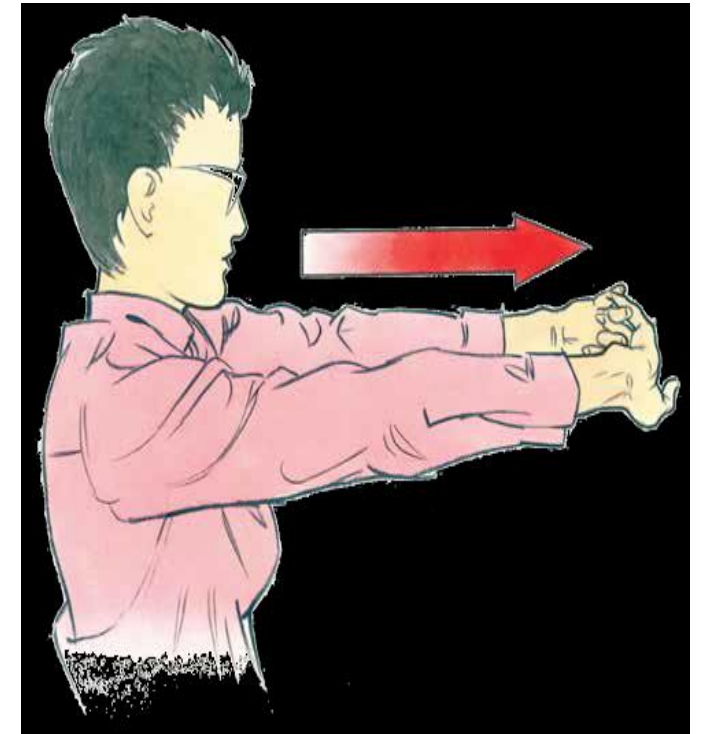
Shoulder Stretch



- Place one hand under your upper arm/elbow.
- Lift your arm/elbow and stretch it across your chest; don't rotate your body as you stretch.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds. You should feel tension in the back of your shoulder.
- Relax and slowly return to starting position.
- Repeat with opposite arm.

Wrist and Elbow Stretch

- Stretch your arms out in front of you and interlace your fingers.
- Turn your hands so your palms are facing away from your body.
- Gently stretch your hands forward.
- Hold stretch for 15-30 seconds.
- Repeat.



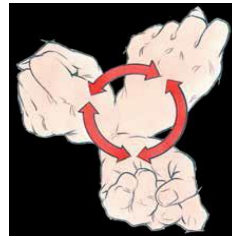
Chest Expansion



- Place hands behind your lower back and clasp your hands together.
- Stretch arms away from your body until you feel a mild stretch in your chest, upper back, and shoulders.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds.
- Repeat.

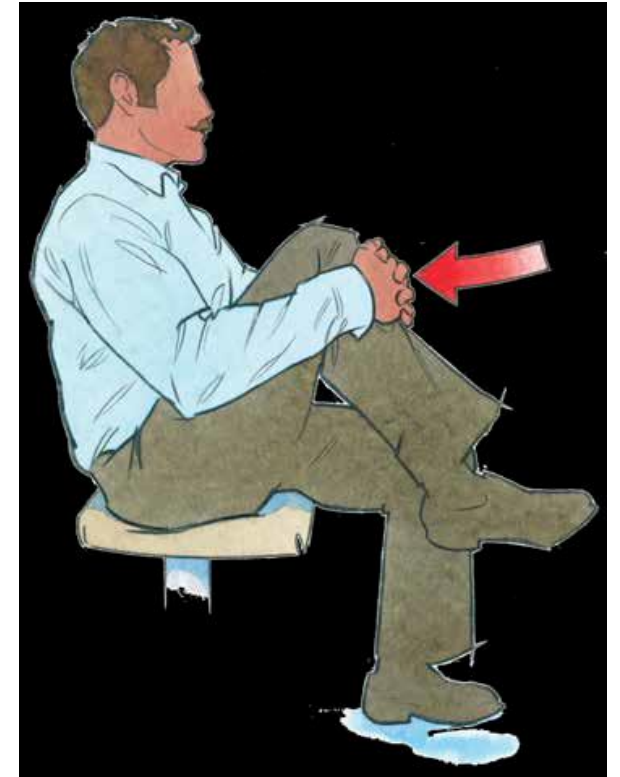
Hand/Wrist Stretch Sequence

- Begin seated with arms extended.
- Start with one hand. Open and close fingers 5 times.
- Make a fist and roll clockwise 5 times, then repeat 5 times counterclockwise.
- Extend arm, palm up, and grasp fingers with opposite hand. Gently bend fingers toward the floor until you feel a mild stretch. Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds, repeating 2-3 times.
- Turn arm over, palm down, and grasp fingers with opposite hand. Gently bend hand towards the floor until you feel a mild stretch. Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds, repeating 2-3 times.
- Repeat on opposite hand.



Lower Back Stretch

- Sit forward in your chair.
- Bring one of your knees toward your chest. Use your hands to grab the back of your thigh or front of your knee and gently pull it toward you. Keep your back straight, being careful not to lean forward.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds. You should feel tension in your lower back and the upper part of your buttock.
- Relax and slowly return to starting position.
- Repeat the stretch with opposite leg.



Lower Back Stretch



- Begin in a seated or standing position.
- Place hands on lower back for support.
- Gently push your palms forward and look up toward the ceiling.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds.
- Repeat.

Back Rotation

- While seated, cross one leg over the other.
- Using the opposite hand on your knee, pull your knee across while twisting the opposite direction.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds.
- Switch legs and repeat.



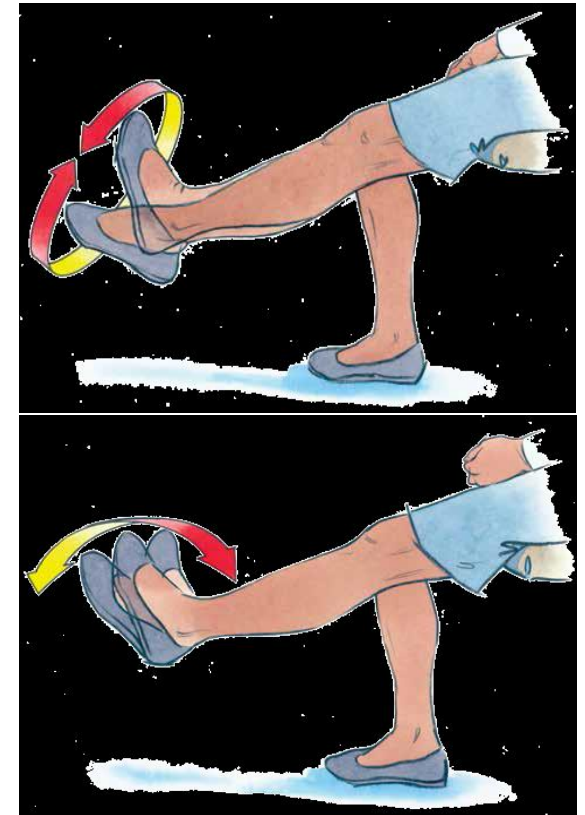
Toe Touch



- While seated, reach forward, bending at the waist.
- Try to touch your toes, or stretch until you feel mild tension.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds.
- Release and repeat.

Foot Stretch

- Lift one leg and use your big toe to make circles in the air.
- Start clockwise and make 5-10 circles, then repeat counterclockwise for 5-10 circles.
- Next, flex and extend your foot, moving toes towards your leg then towards the floor, 5-10 times.
- Repeat with opposite leg.



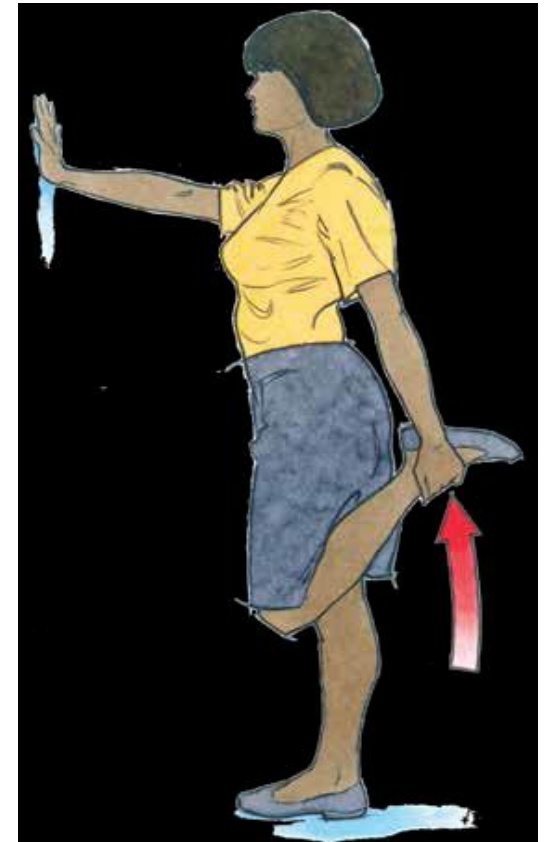
Standing Side Stretch



- Standing upright, place one hand on your hip and stretch the other hand upward towards the ceiling.
- Reach to the side, stretching your extended arm overhead.
- Be sure to keep your shoulders in line with your hips.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds.
- Repeat.

Standing Thigh Stretch

- Stand up straight, placing one hand on a chair or wall for stability.
- Grab one of your ankles (or your pant leg) and bring it up toward your buttock. Remember to maintain an upright position, keeping your back straight and your knees parallel to one another.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds. You should feel tension in the front of your thigh.
- Relax and slowly return to the starting position.
- Repeat with opposite leg.



Quadriceps Stretch



- Place hands against a wall for support.
- Stretch one foot behind you, keeping your heel flat on the floor.
- Bend your front knee. You should feel a mild stretch in the heel and calf of the outstretched leg.
- Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds.
- Repeat with opposite leg.

Disclaimer

Always consult your healthcare provider before beginning a new exercise or stretching regimen. These materials are for informational purposes only and should not be considered medical advice. These materials are not intended to nor should they be construed as a substitute for the advice or treatment of a healthcare professional. By using these materials, you assume any related risks and acknowledge that in no case shall Caterpillar, Inc., its affiliates, directors, officers, or employees be liable for any claims, damages, or injuries directly related to such use.

Source

- Mayo Clinic (www.mayoclinic.org)