

**FACT SHEET**

## 10 Easy Stretches to Reduce Injury Risk

This WorkCare Fact Sheet features 10 simple but effective stretches to help you stay flexible and reduce the likelihood of injury on the job or at home.

Hours of sitting or standing, repetitive tasks, intense bursts of physical activity, moving loads or people, and external stressors such as extreme weather and production deadlines all contribute to injury risk. Other individual risk factors include weight, age, smoking, physical fitness and underlying medical conditions.

Check with your personal health care provider if you have questions. Your fitness goals should always be pursued with your own well-being and the safety of others top of mind.

### Why Stretch?

Stretching increases flexibility and strength. Short, tight muscles cause poor posture, in turn leading to back pain and other complaints. Long, strong muscles help keep your body in alignment, reducing injury risk.

Before stretching or starting work, warm up your body. Take a short walk or jog in place. If you have access to a gym, walk on a treadmill or ride a stationary bike.

The following stretches recommended by WorkCare's clinical team can be easily incorporated into your daily routine.

### Shoulders

- Clasp hands behind your head, palms facing forward
- Spread your elbows
- Hold for 15-20 seconds
- Bring elbows together to release stretch
- Repeat 3-5 times
- You should feel the stretch in your armpits and across the front of your chest



### Shoulder Blade

- Hold right arm in front of your body with the elbow bent
- Rotate hand inward
- Pull arm across body with opposite hand
- Hold for 15-20 seconds
- Repeat 3-5 times
- Switch sides



### Neck

- Lean head to right side
- Drop left shoulder and reach left hand toward the floor
- Feel stretch along side of neck and shoulder
- Hold for 10 seconds
- Repeat 3-5 times
- Switch sides



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### Stretches for Commercial Drivers to Reduce Injury Risks



#### Low Back

- Stand with feet shoulder width apart
- Shift weight to balls of feet
- Put hands on small of back – squeeze buttocks
- Move hips forward – arch low back slightly
- Pinch shoulder blades to open chest
- Hold for 15-20 seconds
- Repeat 3-5 times



#### Back and Waist

- Stand with feet shoulder width apart
- Knees can be bent or straight
- Slowly bend at the waist
- Let your arms hang loose
- Take 3 deep breaths
- Repeat 3-5 times



#### Hands and Wrists



- Place hands on steering wheel or the edge of your desk/workstation
- Push fingers/hands until you feel a stretch
- Take 3 deep breaths
- Repeat 3-5 times



- Place hands together
- Push hands into each other until a stretch is felt
- Take 3 deep breaths
- Repeat 3-5 times

### Hip Flexor

- Take a small step forward
- Put weight on forward foot and bend knee
- Shift hips forward
- Press heel of back foot down
- Feel stretch in hip of the rear leg
- Hold for 15-20 seconds
- Repeat 3-5 times
- Switch sides



### Calves

- Place hands on a stable, upright surface
- Back leg is straight
- Front leg is bent
- Lean forward into your front leg
- Adjust the back leg as necessary to get a stretch
- Repeat 3-5 times



### Sides

- Shift weight to right foot
- Reach up and across head with right hand
- Distribute strain evenly across spine
- Feel stretch along right side of body
- Hold for 15-20 seconds
- Repeat 3-5 times
- Switch sides



### Other Injury Prevention Tips

1. Adhere to safe lifting practices and policies whether you are moving loads or transferring people:
  - get help or use lifting devices, as necessary
  - if moving an object, straddle the load with one foot slightly in front of the other for balance
  - squat and bring the load close to your body
  - do not twist or bend over
  - use your legs, not your back, to lift
  - when setting the load down, squat and make sure it is resting on a stable surface before releasing
2. Adjust your work area to fit your body type and use ergonomically designed tools/equipment.
3. Take micro-breaks to stand, stretch and realign your body.
4. Stay well hydrated and eat a nutritious diet that is low in saturated fats, sodium and processed sugars.
5. Be mindful of slip, trip and fall hazards.
6. Wear protective clothing/gear appropriate for conditions.
7. Maintain a routine exercise regimen; seek professional advice before starting if you do not have one.