

The 12 Best Stretching Exercises

- 1. Just stand up and sit down -- no hands:** Stand up and sit down (over and over) – without using your hands – it can be a challenge. Try it while talking on the phone.
- 2. Substitute exercise for sitting -- while you work:** Substitute an exercise ball for your desk chair. All day you are engaging all the muscles in your core to stay balanced.
- 3. Shrug your shoulders -- to release the neck and shoulders:** Inhale deeply and shrug your shoulders, lifting them high to your ears. Hold. Release and drop. Repeat three times.
Also try shaking your head slowly, yes and no. Move head up and down then side to side:
- 4. Loosen the hands with air circles:** Clench both fists, stretching both hands out in front of you, make circles in the air, first in one direction (to the count of ten), and then reverse. Shake out hands.
- 5. Point your fingers -- good for hands, wrist, and forearms:** Stretch your left hand out in front of you, pointing fingers toward the floor. Use your right hand to increase the stretch, pushing your fingers down and toward the body. Be gentle. Do the same with the other hand. Now stretch your left hand out straight in front, wrist bent, with fingers pointing skyward. Use your right hand to increase the stretch, pulling the fingers back toward your body. Do the same on the other side.
- 6. Release the upper body with a torso twist:** Inhale and as you exhale, turn to the right and grab the back of your chair with your right hand, and grab the arm of the chair with your left. Use your grasp on the chair to help twist your torso around as far to the back of the room as possible. Hold the twist and let your eyes continue to stretch. Slowly come back to facing forward. Repeat on the other side.
- 7. Do leg extensions -- work the abs and legs:** Grab the seat of your chair to brace yourself and extend your legs straight out in front of you so they are parallel to the floor. Flex and point your toes five times.
- 8. Stretch your back with a "big hug":** Hug your body, placing right hand on left shoulder and the left hand on your right shoulder. Breathe in and out, releasing the area between your shoulder blades.
- 9. Cross your arms -- for the shoulders and upper back:** Extend one arm in front of you. With the other hand, grab the elbow of the outstretched arm and pull it across your chest. Hold then release. Repeat with other arm.
- 10. Stretch your back and shoulders with a "leg hug":** Sitting in your chair, lean over (chest to knees). Bring your hands behind your legs. Right hand grasping left wrist, forearm, or elbow. Left hand grasping the right. Hold. Release your hands to the floor. Repeat as often as needed.
- 11. Look up to release upper body:** Sit up tall in your chair, or stand up. Stretch arms overhead and interlock fingers. Turn palms to ceiling as you lift your chin, tilt your head back, and gaze up.
- 12. Substitute walks for email -- and don't eat at your desk:** Instead of emailing, walk over to the colleague you really want to talk to.