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**January 24, 2011**

# WELLNESS WEEKLY

## Exercise at Your Desk

Feeling the aches and pains of spending too many hours tackling the pile of work on your desk or leaning forward hunched over the keyboard? Sitting at a desk all day puts pressure on your lower back, neck and shoulders. When the day is over, you may feel the effects with symptoms like soreness or exhaustion.

Fortunately, proper stretching is something you can do to give your muscles and tendons the rest, recovery and nutrients they need for health and injury prevention. Even if you have a comfortable, well-adjusted chair, it's still necessary to stretch and change positions because your body is designed to move.

Relieve common aches and pains by taking one-minute breaks every 20 minutes or so to relieve tension and loosen stiff muscles. Make sure to stretch your arm, shoulder and back muscles. Here are a few helpful stretches to get you started:

**Finger stretch**— Separate and straighten your fingers until you feel a stretch, keeping your hand in alignment with your wrist. Hold for 10 seconds. Next, bend the end and middle knuckles of your fingers, keeping your hand and wrist in the same position. Hold for 10 seconds. Relax and repeat.

**Back scratch**— Give yourself a pat on the back, and gently stretch the back of your arm at the same time. Reach behind your head and place your hand on your upper back, keeping your arm close to your ear. Gently hold your elbow with your opposite hand. Pull your elbow toward the back of your head and reach your hand toward the middle of your back until you feel a gentle stretch. Hold for 10 to 15 seconds. Relax. Repeat on the other side.

**Chin tuck**— Start by facing straight ahead. Keep your back straight, and pull your chin toward your chest until you feel a stretch along the back of your neck. Hold for five to 10 seconds. Relax and return to your starting position. Repeat two to three times.

**Shoulder shrug**— Slowly bring your shoulders up toward your ears. Hold for three to five seconds, then roll your shoulders back and down. Relax. Repeat five to 10 times.

Daily stretching can help you feel better, boost your energy level and reduce the pain caused by prolonged sitting at your desk.

