



A guide to microbreaks with practical exercises

WorkplaceNL

Health | Safety | Compensation

Why microbreak?

- To avoid prolonged static postures
- Ensures a healthy musculoskeletal system
- Allows stressed body tissues to rest/recover
- Prolonged sitting, standing or physical labour, fatigues body tissues (e.g. muscles)
- Re-energizes the brain
- Increases productivity

Quick guidelines

- Recommend a 1-2 minute microbreak following 20-30 minutes of sitting
- Should aim toward a 1:1 sit-stand ratio
- Suggest a postural change following 30 minutes of static standing
- Microbreak in opposite/different posture:
 - if you sit for long periods: get up, move around and stretch
 - if you stand stationary for long periods: sit, rest and stretch
 - if you work in awkward postures or perform physical labour: rest the active muscles, and stretch to improve muscle balance and posture

Safety

- If you have an injury, please consult with your health care provider before performing stretches
- STOP if you feel pain or severe discomfort. Consult your doctor for advice
- NEVER perform stretches that cause discomfort



Photo credit: www.nbc29.com

Stretching

DO

- Ensure your body is warmed up before stretching
- Engage your core, but breathe normally
- Move/Bend with your HIP joints, not with your low back

NEVER

- Bounce
- Push/pull excessively
- Lock the knees of your supporting leg(s)

Pick a couple stretches per microbreak

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

Eyes

- Close your eyes. Cup your hands and place them lightly over your eyes. Rest your elbows on your desk and breathe deeply for a minute
- Focus on a distant object (at least 20 feet away)
- Look up, down, and side to side without moving your head

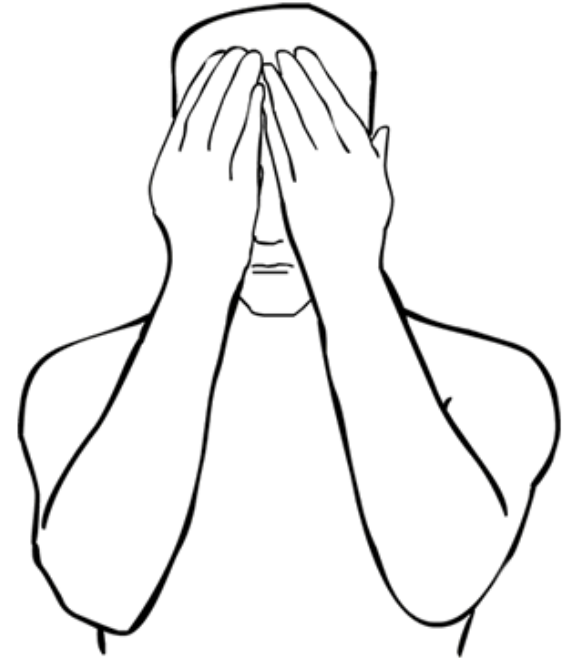


Photo credit: homeremediess.com

Fingers

- Separate and straighten your fingers until you feel a stretch. Hold 10 seconds
- Relax
- Bend your fingers at the knuckles. Hold 10 seconds
- Repeat first outward stretch once more



Photo credit: 1) www.osteoinfo.com.au 2) www.rsipain.com

Forearms/Wrists

- Arm straight, palm facing down, gently push on back of the hand to point the fingers down until you feel a stretch. Hold 3-5 seconds. Relax. Repeat 3 times
- Point the fingers upward, place hand on palm and press until you feel a stretch. Hold for 3-5 seconds. Relax. Repeat 3 times
- Elbows on table and palms together, slowly lower wrists to table until you feel a stretch. Keep palms together throughout stretch. Hold 3-5 seconds. Relax. Repeat 3 times

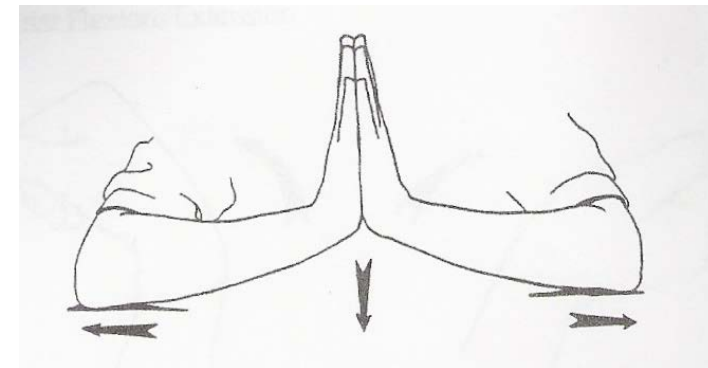
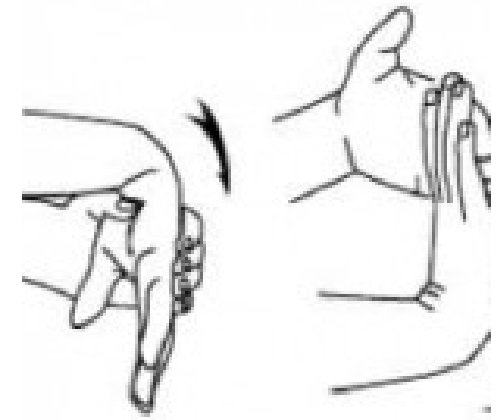
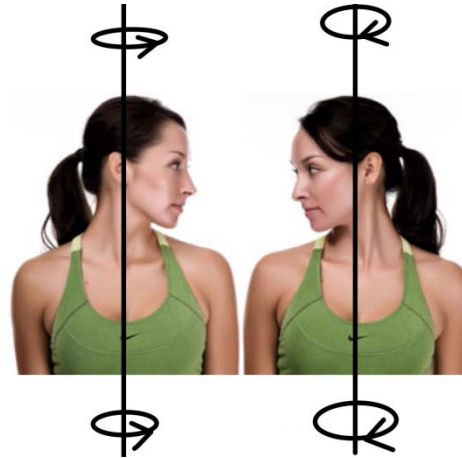


Photo credits: cchohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/office/stretching.html

Neck



- Lower chin to chest keeping shoulders straight
- Hold 15-20 sec



- Rotate head to one side keeping shoulders straight
- Hold 15-20 sec
- Rotate other side



- Tilt head to bring ear to one shoulder (do not raise shoulder)
- Hold 15-20 sec
- Repeat other side

Photo credit: 1) stretchify.com 2) tclinic.co.uk. 3) calewellphysicaltherapy.com/neck_exercises

Neck

- Sit or stand tall
- Bring right arm behind back, diagonally
- Rotate head 45 degrees to the left
- Place left hand behind on your head and gently pull neck toward your left knee for 15 to 20 seconds
- Repeat with opposite side

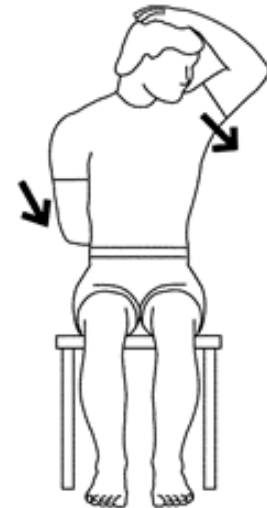
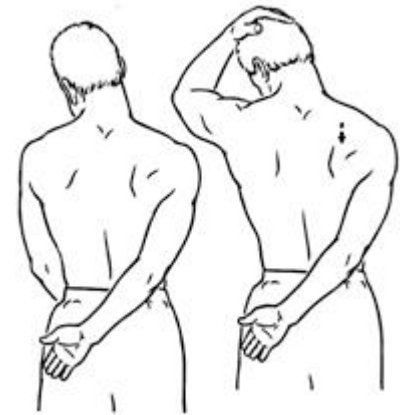


Photo credits: 1) www.kybbmassage.com 2) www.physiowarzish.in

Shoulders

- Stand tall. With arms held out to side at shoulder height, rotate arms in forward direction making progressively larger circles
- Repeat in opposite direction
- 8-10 in each direction



Photo credit: www.forconstructionpros.com

Shoulders/Upper Back

- Keep your arm straight and bring it across body horizontally. Pull your arm in to your body by pressing your other hand just above your elbow
- Hold 15-20 seconds
- Repeat with opposite arm



Photo credit: www.iposture.com

Shoulders/Chest/Upper Back

- Stand tall
- Arms at chest level, gently swing arms back and forth
- Repeat 8-10 times

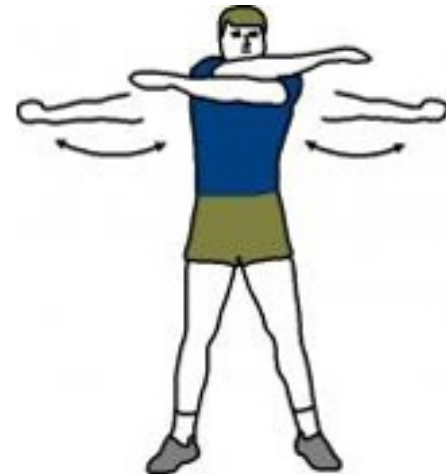
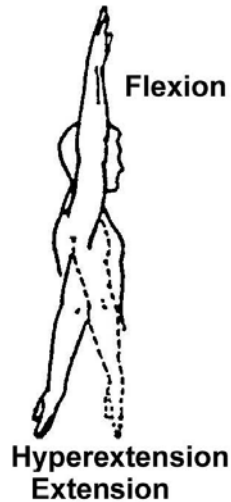


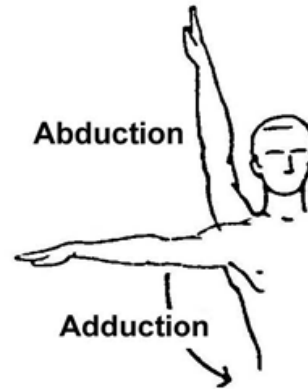
Photo credit: <http://www.hosmerchiropractic.com>

Shoulders/Mid Back

Stand tall and repeat each 8-10 times



- Gently swing arms up and down (front to back)



- Gently swing arms up and down (to the side)



- Elbows at shoulder height, rotate hands straight up and down

Photo credits: brooksidepress.org

Chest/Shoulders

- Head upright, shoulders back and down, clasp your hands behind your back, slowly turning your elbows inward (imagine grasping a ball)
- Lift your arms up behind you until you feel a stretch
- Hold for 15-20 seconds

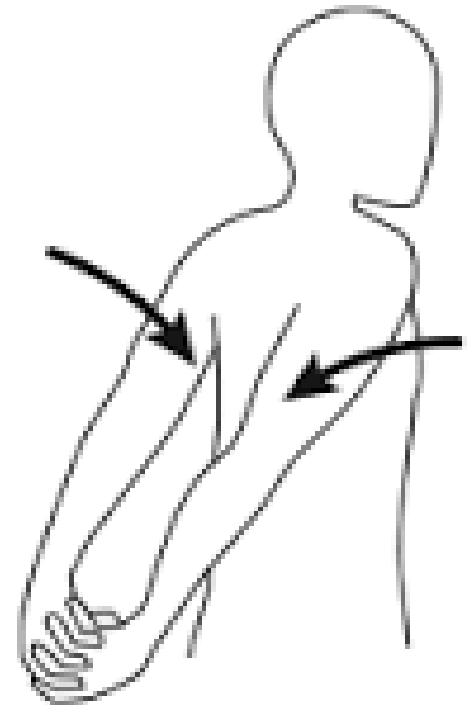


Photo credit: CCOHS ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/office/stretching.html

Chest

- Sit or stand tall
- With shoulders and elbows at 90 degrees, bring elbows back and squeeze shoulder blades together and down
- Hold 15-20 seconds



Chest

- Stand in doorway or next to a wall
- Bend the arm being stretched and place the forearm flat against the wall or doorframe, elbow a little higher than shoulder
- Step forward and rotate your body away from your outstretched arm
- Hold 15-20 seconds
- Repeat with other arm



Photo credit: stretchify.com

Mid Back/Shoulders

- Take a deep breath and reach up over your head with both arms
- Hold 15-20 seconds
- Exhale and lower arms slowly



Photo credit: www.webmd.com

Mid Back/Shoulders/Side Core

- Raise arms overhead, palms facing ceiling
- Reach toward the sky (do not arch back)
- Slowly lean to right while keeping the tension of the reach, drawing ribcage down as you bend
- Hold 3-5 seconds
- Return to upright. Repeat with other side



Photo credit: trinitychiro.com

Mid/Upper Back

- Sit tall with knees at 90 degrees
- Grasp the armrest on one side of your chair with both hands
- Gently rotate through the torso toward your hands, pulling gently to increase the stretch
- Breathe full inhales and exhales
- Hold 15-20 seconds
- Repeat on other side



Photo credit: www.bodyandsoul.ca

Mid Back/Hips

- Stand tall, hips pointing forward
- Raise arms to the sides shoulder level. Rotate torso at 90 degrees to your right, rotating the hips also, then return and rotate to left
- Repeat 10 times



Photo credit: hifitnessclub.wordpress.com

Hips/Low Back

- Place left ankle over right leg, just above knee
- Slowly bend forward at the hips (do not round back)
- Hold 15-20 seconds
- Switch sides and repeat



Photo credit: www.iptmiami.com

Hips

You may wish to place padding under knee for support

- Kneel on right knee
- Place left foot in front of you, knee bent
- Place hands at waist as a guide to avoid bending the waist
- With back straight, engage core and buttocks and push pelvis down and forward, shifting weight into front leg
- Hold 15-20 seconds
- Switch legs and repeat



(deeper hip flexor stretch)

Photo credits: 1) sportskneetherapy.com 2) fitnessrevolutionrowlett.com

Glutes/Low Back

- Stand tall. Bring one knee up towards the chest. Hug knee, hold for 2 seconds
- Repeat with other leg
- 8-10 per leg



Glutes/Quads/Hamstrings

- Stand tall, feet shoulder-width apart
- Take a large step forward with one foot and lower body straight down by lowering back knee toward the floor. Stop just before touching knee to floor
- Raise back to standing position
- Repeat with other leg
- Repeat 5-8 times per leg



Photo credit: gethealthyu.com

Quads/Hamstrings

- Stand tall, feet facing outwards, slightly wider than shoulder-width apart
- Slowly descend, hinging at hips
 - Plant your feet, support body weight through heels
 - Shift buttocks backward before descending
 - Knees stay in line with toes, or behind
 - Back stays neutral (shoulders back, chest tall, natural low back curve maintained)
- Dig heels into the floor to stand back up, straightening knees and bringing hips forward
- 8-10 repetitions; stop if form begins to suffer

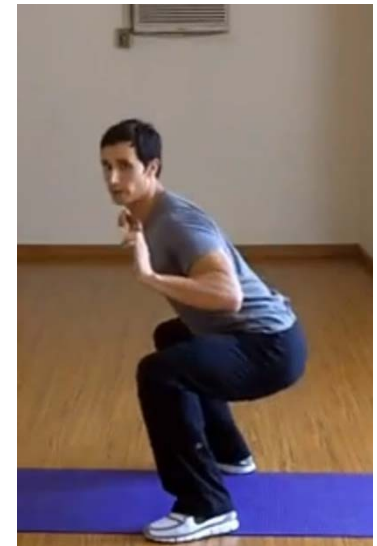


Photo credit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kzSgz9JIU>

Quads

- Stand tall and place one hand on solid structure for balance
- Grab an ankle/pant leg and bring heel towards buttocks
- Gently push hips forward
- Hold 15-20 seconds



Hamstrings/Calves

- Place one leg in front of the other
- Bend the back knee and support your weight on the bent leg
- Pointing your front toes upward, flex at the hips (maintaining neutral spine) until you feel a stretch
- Hold 15-20 seconds
- Alternate method: Use a platform to rest front foot on and raise it's height as capability increases



Photo credits: 1) www.teachpe.com 2) fitness.stackexchange.com 3) fitness.stackexchange.com

Treat microbreaks like an essential job duty.

By doing so, you will reduce your risk of MSIs!