



# A Guide to Microbreaks with Practical Exercises

# What are Microbreaks?

- Frequent but brief pauses (e.g. 1-2 minutes) from tasks that use the same group of muscles so the muscles can rest and recover
- May consist of performing a different task if different muscles are used

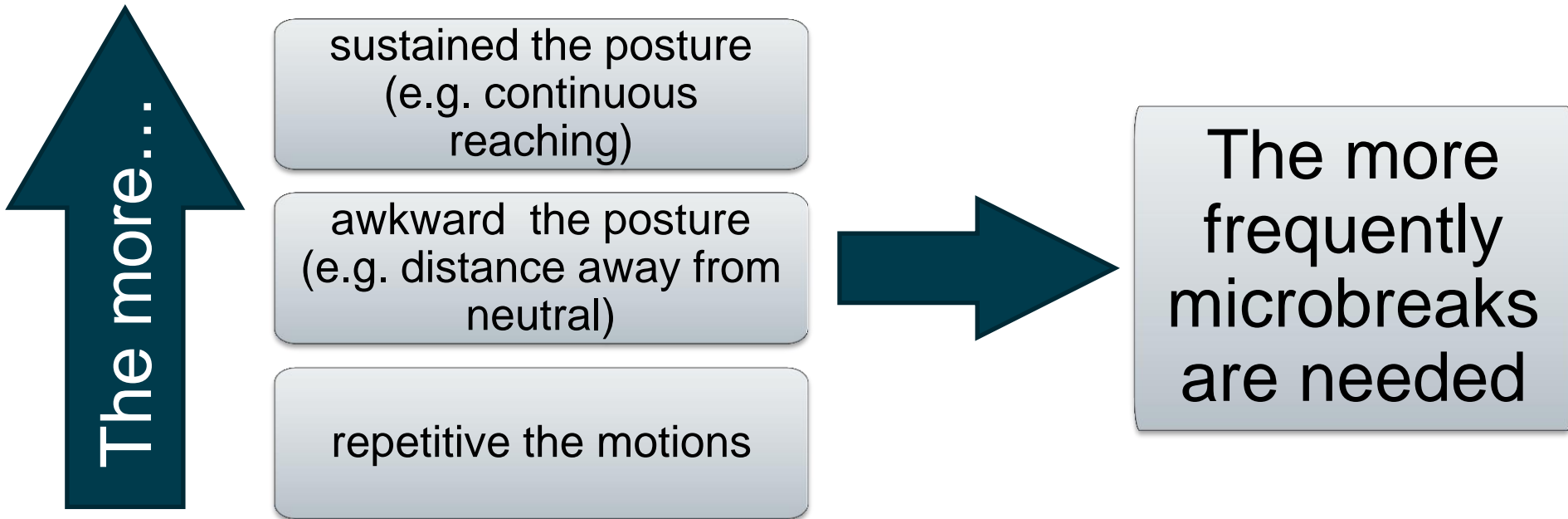
# Why Microbreak?

- Static postures, repetitive motions and forceful exertions fatigue body tissues (e.g. muscles)
- Stressed body tissues can rest and recover
- Musculoskeletal injury (MSI) risk decreases
- Brain re-energizes
- Concentration and productivity improves
- Variety of movement is key to health

# Guidelines

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Microbreak</b>
Prolonged sitting (20 to 30 minutes)	Stand, move around, stretch
Prolonged static standing (approximately 30 minutes)	Move around, sit, stretch
Prolonged repetitive motions	Rest active muscles, perform different task
Prolonged physically demanding work	Rest active muscles, perform non-physical work

# Guidelines



- Aim for a sitting-to-standing ratio of 1:1. Switch back and forth between sitting and standing
- Intentionally move a couple minutes per hour minimum (e.g. take a brief walk)

# Why Stretch?

- Increases blood flow to soft tissues
- Improves muscle balance and posture
- Improves muscle coordination
- Reduces tendon and muscle tightness
- Increases joint range of motion

# Stretching

- 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: <https://www.medexpress.com>

# Stretching

## DO

- Make sure 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 or pull excessively
- Lock the knee(s) 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



# Fingers

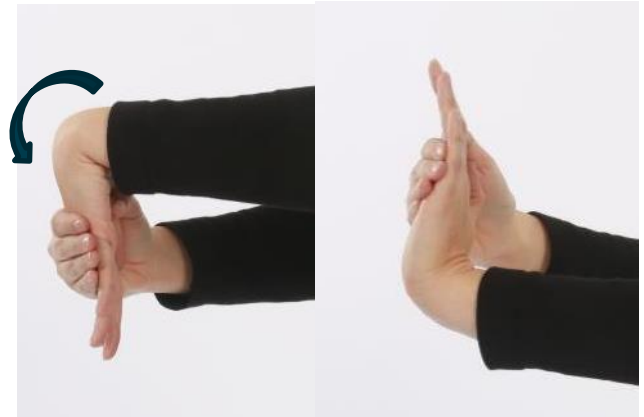
- Separate and straighten your fingers until you feel a stretch. Hold 10 seconds
- Relax
- Bend your fingers at the knuckles. Hold 10 seconds
- Repeat first outward stretch once more



*Photo credit: 1) [www.osteoinfo.com.au](http://www.osteoinfo.com.au)*

# 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 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](http://cchohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/office/stretching.html)*

# Neck



- Lower chin to chest keeping shoulders straight
- Hold 15-20 seconds
- Slowly lift chin to starting position



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



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

# 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 other side

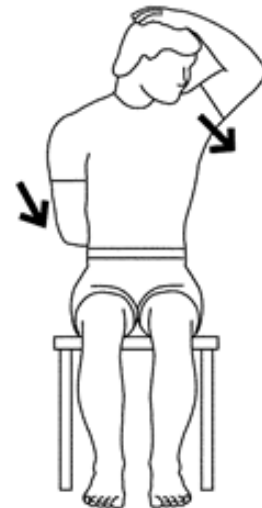
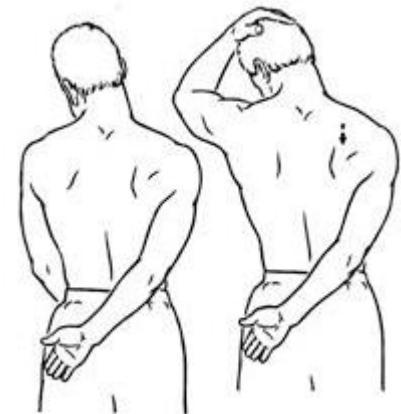


Photo credits: 1) [www.kybbmassage.com](http://www.kybbmassage.com) 2) [www.physiowarzish.in](http://www.physiowarzish.in)

# Shoulders

- Stand tall. Raise arms out to the sides at shoulder height
- Rotate arms in forward direction making progressively larger circles
- Repeat other direction
- 8-10 each direction



# Shoulders/Upper Back

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

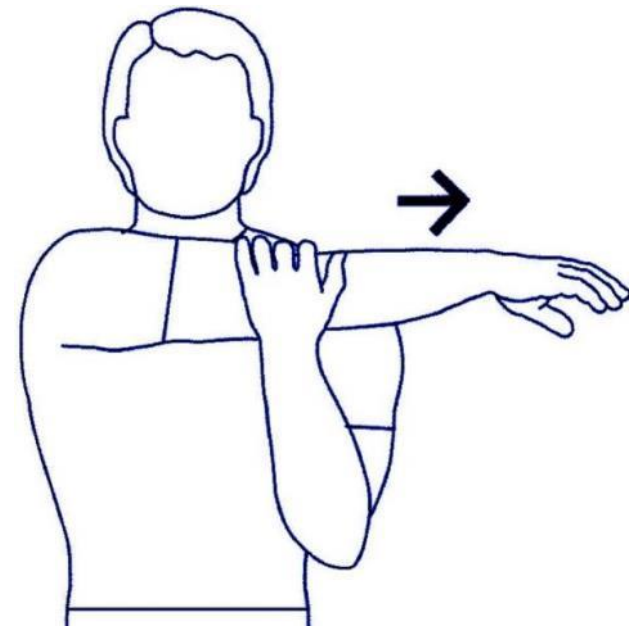


Photo credit: <https://salusmt.com/saturday-stretch-rhomboids/>



# Shoulders/Chest/Upper Back

- Stand tall
- Arms stretched horizontally to the sides, gently cross arms at the front and swing to the back
- Repeat back and forth 8-10 times



# Shoulders/Mid Back

Stand tall and repeat each 8-10 times



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



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



- Gently swing arms up and down (sideways)

Photo credit (middle): 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



# 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

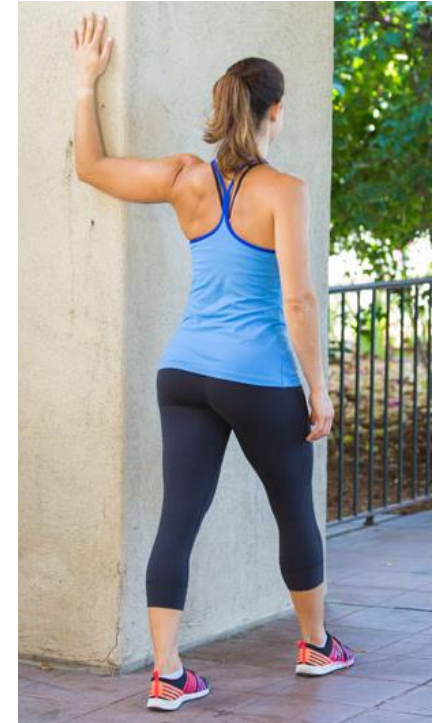
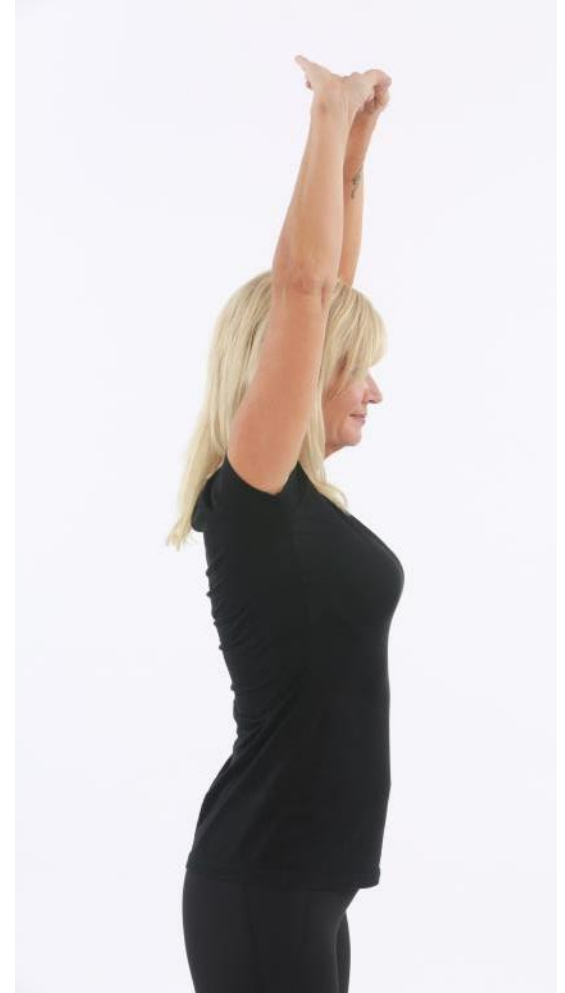


Photo credit: <https://www.inspiro.org.au>

# 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



# 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



# 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](http://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



# 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

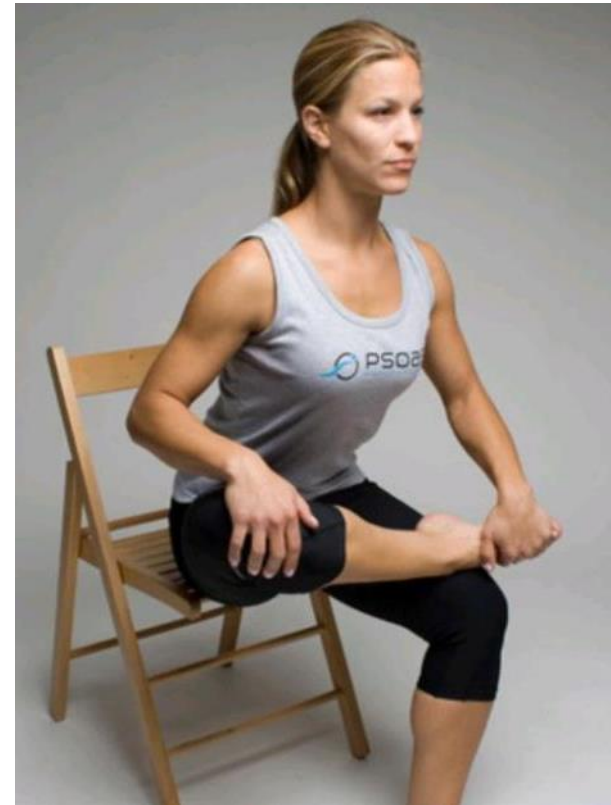


Photo credit: <https://www.skimble.com>

# Hips

\*You may wish to place padding under knee for support

- Kneel on left knee
- Place right 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
- Bottom image shows a deeper hip flexor stretch. Raise left arm and rotate torso toward same side as front (right) leg



Photo credit (bottom): 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



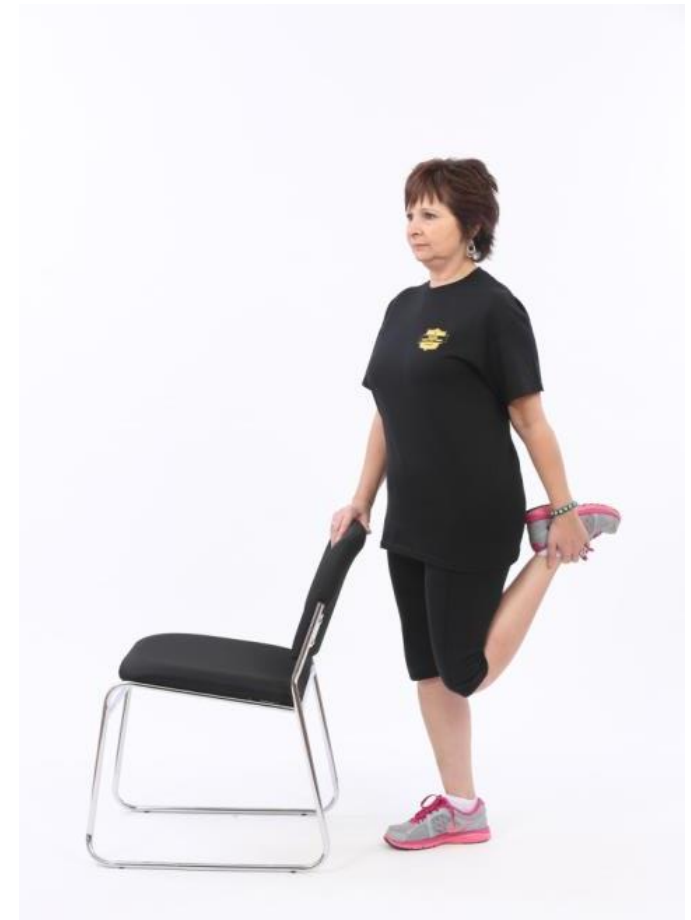
# Quads/Hamstrings

- 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



# 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

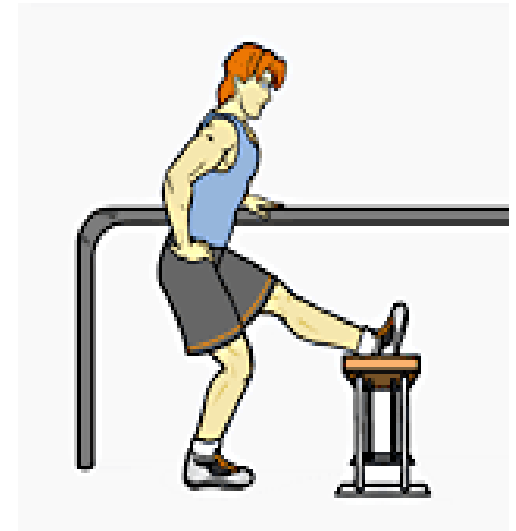


Photo credits: 1) [www.teachpe.com](http://www.teachpe.com) 2) [fitness.stackexchange.com](http://fitness.stackexchange.com)



# Organize work to reduce MSI risk