

Work-Friendly Stretches

Whether you're in your office or working from home, these simple exercises are a great way to ease stiffness and muscle tension.*

Shoulder Relaxer

- ▶ Inhale and raise your right shoulder up toward your ear. On the exhale, release your shoulder down. Repeat three times and relax.
- ▶ Inhale and move your right shoulder forward. On the exhale, return it to the starting position (repeat three times).
- ▶ Inhale and move your right shoulder back. On the exhale, return it to the starting position (repeat three times).
- ▶ Repeat the sequence on the left side.
- ▶ Inhale and bring both shoulders up toward your ears. Tense, and then drop your shoulders down as you exhale (repeat three times).
- ▶ Cross your right arm over your chest and under your left arm, reaching back to your left shoulder blade with your right hand. Cross your left arm over your chest, your left hand reaching for your right shoulder blade as if you are hugging yourself. Relax your shoulders down and away from your ears. Take several deep, easy breaths, releasing any tension in your shoulders with each exhalation.
- ▶ Repeat, but first cross your left arm, then your right.

The next sequence of movements can be done as part of the above exercise, or can stand alone.



- ▶ Place your fingertips on your shoulders. Slowly draw large circles with your elbows, moving in rhythm with your breathing. Exhale as your elbows come forward. Inhale as they go back and your chest expands. Focus on the expansion of your chest and the release of tension in your shoulders. Draw three circles.
- ▶ Reverse the direction of the circles and draw three more. Coordinate the expansion of your chest with each inhalation.

Cat Pose in the Chair

- ▶ Sit forward on your chair, extending your arms behind you to rest your hands on the back edge of the seat. As you exhale, draw in your abdominal muscles as you tuck your head and round your shoulders and torso forward. Do this until your pelvis tilts and your lower back rounds.

*Please check with your physician before starting any new exercise routine.



- ▶ As you inhale, look up to the ceiling, lifting your breastbone, spreading your chest, pulling your shoulders back, and arching your lower back (repeat three times).

Child Pose

Sit forward on your chair. Imagine your head is so heavy that it slowly draws your neck, shoulders, and torso forward over your legs. Your back rounds. Hold this position for thirty seconds, breathing gently. Come out of the pose, rolling carefully from the base of the spine and straightening one vertebra at a time. Sit quietly for a couple of minutes and focus on your breathing.

Exercises for the Head and Neck

Hold each of these positions for the space of three gentle breaths. Return your head to upright center before completing the next movement.

- ▶ Drop your chin to your chest. Feel the weight of your head stretch the back of your neck.
- ▶ Look as far as you can over your right shoulder, then your left.
- ▶ Drop your right ear to your right shoulder, then drop your left ear to your left shoulder.
- ▶ Clasp your hands behind your neck. Drop your head back. Let your jaw drop open and relax your whole face. Breathe in and yawn, stretching your eyes and mouth open wide. On the exhale, release any tension in your jaw and face. Bring your head back to an upright position.
- ▶ Draw small circles with your chin very slowly, three times clockwise, then three times counter-clockwise.

The Back Relaxer

- ▶ Move to the edge of your chair. With your eyes closed, notice how your back feels. On your next inhale, arch backward. Stretch your spine only as far as feels comfortable.
- ▶ Exhale and round your back, rolling your shoulders forward and letting go.
- ▶ Repeat three times, keeping your full attention on breathing, stretching, and letting go.

The Scrunch

Inhale and scrunch all of your facial muscles in toward the center of your face. You should feel as if you are trying to squeeze all your tension toward the tip of your nose. Exhale and let it go.

LifeMatters is available 24/7/365 to offer tips on managing muscle tension and stress. Call anytime.

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