



CORPORATE CARE WORKS  
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## 'Deskercise' for the Office Bound

Most people who exercise regularly say that being active makes them feel healthier and more energetic. And that's not limited to joggers or tennis players. Many office workers are doing simple exercises at their desks, with surprisingly healthy benefits.

These activities give you a mental boost, fight stress and promote flexibility, health experts say.

The body dislikes staying still for long. The longer you're still, the more tension that accumulates from being in one position.

Yet, the average American sits for 7 1/2 hours a day! If you're stuck behind a desk for that long, you can do some simple exercises while sitting or standing. No special skills or equipment is needed. One of the simplest exercises, for instance, is to just lean back in your chair and stretch.

Mind you, the exercises won't develop your cardiovascular system, build strength or make you look better in your bathing suit. But they will reduce muscle tension and stress and help maintain the strength, flexibility and muscle tone you already have.

Remember to breathe normally while holding your body in one of the stretching positions. When you're done, finish with some slow, deep breathing.

If you work at a computer terminal -- and if you're reading this at work, then this is for you! -- stretch your wrist muscles occasionally and take short breaks, health experts say. The idea is to prevent carpal tunnel syndrome, a painful wrist malady caused by repetitive movement.

The experts recommend doing the desk exercises every hour or so, even if you do only one exercise at a time. Anything is better than staying in one position.

In doing these exercises, go slowly and use the full range of motion. Sometimes joints won't move quickly through a full range of motion, so if you do an exercise too quickly, you won't get the full benefit. You also risk pulling a muscle if you do the exercises too quickly.

It's important to get up once an hour and walk around, even if it's just to a filing cabinet. Sitting for long periods puts stress on the lower back, and leads to muscle atrophy and a loss of flexibility.

A 10-minute walk is the best exercise for the office bound, experts say. When that's not possible, the desk exercises are the next best thing.

### **Pectoral stretch:**

Clasp hands behind head. Pull shoulder blades together and elbows back. Repeat 2 times.

Purpose: Stretches pectorals or chest area.

**Sitting bend:**

Sit in a chair, feet flat on the floor, knees about 12 inches apart, hands at sides. Bend over as far as comfortable, hands reaching toward or touching the floor. Hold 3-5 seconds and then slowly pull your body back up into a sitting position while tightening your abdominal muscles. Relax, and repeat 4-5 times.

Purpose: Stretches low back and hamstrings.

**Wrist flexion and hyperextension:**

Flexion -- gently apply force with the left hand to stretch the right wrist toward the underside of the right forearm. Hold for 3-5 seconds, relax and repeat with other side. Repeat exercises 5 times each wrist.

Hyperextension -- gently apply force with the left palm to bend the right hand backward. Hold 3-5 seconds, relax and repeat 5 times each wrist.

Purpose: Stretches wrists.

**Hug:**

Brings arms across chest trying to touch as far around the back as possible. Hold for 10 seconds, relax and repeat with a different arm on top.

Purpose: Stretches back and shoulders.

**Head tilt:**

Slowly bend head to the right as far as possible, then to the left, then forward (with chin against your throat) and to the back. Repeat 2 times in each direction.

Purpose: Loosens up, stimulates neck muscles.

**Vertical stretches:**

Feet shoulder-width apart, raise up on toes, extend the arms overhead. Alternately, reach as high as possible with each hand for 7-10 seconds. Relax, and repeat exercise 4 times.

Purpose: Reduces tension and activates all major muscle groups.