



NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Ergonomics in your home office

As many continue to work remotely in home offices we would like to reach out with some ergonomic support. If you are struggling with your set up please contact Kim Hegmegee in the Safety Department. khegmege@nmu.edu. If you are in need of office equipment contact your supervisor.

Some Ergonomic suggestions for your home office.

Create a Dedicated Workspace

Most of us do not have an “office” in our homes, therefore poor chairs for sitting more than 30-45 minutes. Identify a space with a desk or table that can be dedicated for computer use; do not work while sitting on a bed or couch for long periods of time

Monitor: If possible use a separate monitor, keyboard and mouse; if using a laptop place on a stand or books

Keyboard and mouse: Use a traditional set-up, hook laptop directly to monitor or place laptop on stand and use an external keyboard and mouse

Chair: Use a chair with low back support and seated cushion; for a kitchen or dining chair insert a seat cushion and roll up a soft towel or blanket to place in your low back area. If your feet are not flat on the floor find something to use as a foot stool.

Phone: Use the speakerphone or microphone/voice activation for cell phone texting; don't brace the handset or cell phone between the neck and shoulder

Your body is designed to move throughout the day, your goal is variety. Sitting or standing for long periods can have adverse health risks.

- Vary your position often throughout the day.
- Rotate your job tasks to avoid constant keyboard work.
- Take frequent, short breaks to get up and move around. Do one or two of the below stretches each break.

Make sure to keep an upright posture. Don't hunch your shoulders forward or lean your body towards your laptop screen.

A comfortable workstation setup promotes:

- Neutral postures with the neck aligned with the spine (NOT bent or thrust forward)
- Back relaxed and supported
- Shoulders relaxed (NOT hunched or rounded)
- Maintain a neutral neck posture by placing the top of the screen at about eye level or slightly lower if using bifocal glasses.

- Elbows close to the body and bent at an angle between 90 and 120 degrees
- Wrist and hands straight (NOT bent or turned)

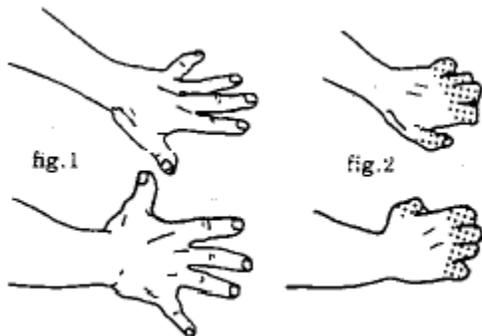
Here are 15 stretches to rotate through during your day

How to Stretch

Stretching should be done slowly without bouncing. Stretch to where you feel a slight, easy stretch. Hold this feeling for 5-20 seconds. As you hold this stretch, the feeling of tension should diminish. If it doesn't, just ease off slightly into a more comfortable stretch. The easy stretch reduces tension and readies the tissues for the developmental stretch.

After holding the easy stretch, you can move a fraction of an inch farther into the stretch until you feel mild tension again. This is the developmental stretch which should be held for 10-15 seconds. This feeling of stretch tension should also slightly diminish or stay the same. If the tension increases or becomes painful, you are overstretching. Ease off a bit to a comfortable stretch. The developmental stretch reduces tension and will safely increase flexibility.

Hold only stretch tensions that feel good to you. The key to stretching is to be relaxed while you concentrate on the area being stretched. Your breathing should be slow, deep, and rhythmic. Don't worry about how far you can stretch.



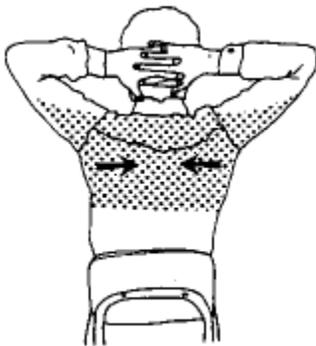
- 1. Separate and straighten your fingers until tension of a stretch is felt (fig. 1). Hold for 10 seconds, relax and bend your fingers at the knuckles and hold for 10 seconds (fig. 2). Repeat first outward stretch once more.



- 2. This stretch may cause people around you to think you are very strange indeed, but you often find a lot of tension in your face from eye strain. Raise your eyebrows and open your eyes as wide as possible. At the same time, open your mouth to stretch the muscles around your nose and chin and stick your tongue out. Hold this stretch for 5-10 seconds. Caution: If you have clicking or popping noises when opening your mouth, check with your dentist before doing this stretch.



- 3. Shoulder Shrug: Raise the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel slight tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold this feeling of tension for 3-5 seconds, then relax your shoulders downward into their normal position. Do this 2-3 times. Good to use at the first signs of tightness or tension in the shoulder and neck area.



- 4. With fingers interlaced behind head, keep elbows straight out at sides with upper body in a good aligned position. Now pull your shoulder blades toward each other to create a feeling of tension though upper back and shoulder blades. Hold this feeling of mild tension for 8-10 seconds, then relax. Do several times. This is good to do when shoulders and upper back are tense or tight.



- 5. Start with head in a comfortable, aligned position. Slowly tilt head to left side to stretch muscles on side of neck. Hold stretch for 10-20 seconds. Feel a good, even stretch and do not overstretch. Then tilt head to right side and stretch. Do 2-3 times to each side.



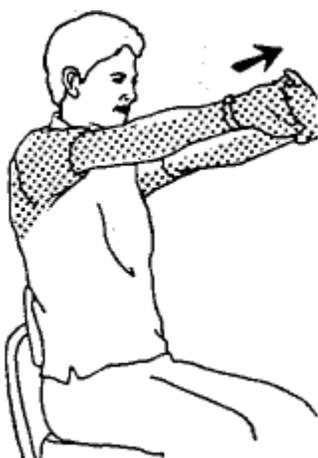
- 6. From a stable, aligned sitting position turn your chin toward your left shoulder to create a stretch on the right side of your neck. Hold right stretch tensions for 10-20 seconds. Do each side twice.



- 7. Gently tilt your head forward to stretch the back of the neck. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times. Hold only tensions that feel good. Do not stretch to the point of pain.



- 8. Hold your left arm just above the elbow with the right hand. Now gently pull elbow toward opposite shoulder as you look over your left shoulder. Hold stretch for 15-20 seconds. Do both sides.



- 9. Interlace fingers, then straighten arms in front of you. The palm should be facing away from you as you do this stretch. Feel stretch in arms and through the upper part of the shoulder blades. Hold stretch for 10-15 seconds. Do at least two times.



- 10. Interlace fingers then turn palms upwards above your head as you straighten your arms. Think of elongating your arms as you feel a stretch through arms and upper sides of rib cage. Hold for 10-20 seconds. Hold only stretches that feel relaxing. Do three times.



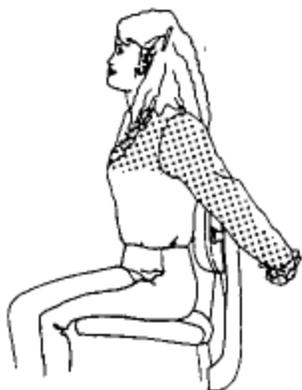
- 11. Hold left elbow with right hand, then gently pull elbow behind head until an easy tension-stretch is felt in shoulder or back of upper arm (triceps). Hold easy stretch for 30 seconds. Do not overstretch. Do both sides.



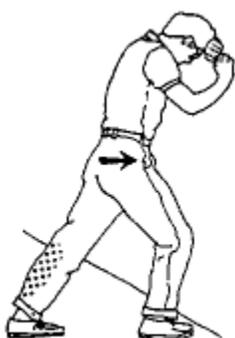
- 12. Hold onto your lower leg just below the knee. Gently pull bent leg toward your chest and isolate a stretch in the side of your upper leg. Make use of the right arm to pull bent leg towards the opposite shoulder. Hold for 10-20 seconds at easy stretch tension. Do both sides.



- 13. A stretch for the side of hip, lower and middle of back. Sit with left leg bent over right leg, then rest elbow for forearm of right arm on the outside of the upper thigh of the left leg. Now apply some controlled, steady pressure toward the right with the elbow or forearm. As you do this, look over your left shoulder to get the stretch feeling. Do both sides. Hold for 15 seconds.



- 14. The next stretch is done with fingers interlaced behind your back. Slowly turn your elbows inward while straightening your arms. An excellent stretch for shoulders and arms. This is good to do when you find yourself slumping forward from your shoulders. This stretch can be done at any time. Hold for 5-15 seconds. Do twice.



- 15. To stretch your calf, stand a little way from a wall for solid support and lean on it with your forehead resting on your hands. Bend over and place your foot on the floor in front while leaving the other leg straight. Slowly move your hips forward until you feel a stretch in the calf of your straight leg. Be sure to keep the heel of the foot of the straight leg on the floor and your toes pointed straight ahead. Hold an easy stretch for 30 seconds. Stretch both legs.

Workstation ergonomics: ideal set-up

