

DESK DUTY

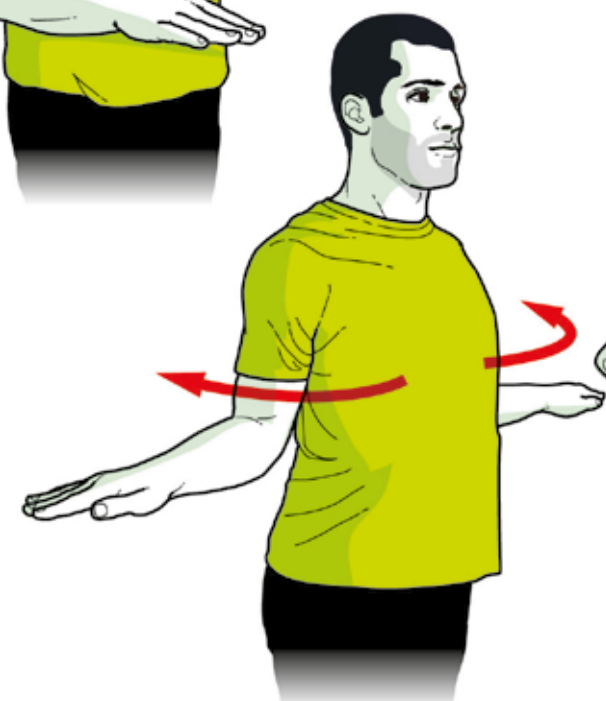
If your job involves plenty of screen time, make these stretches a daily habit to reduce discomfort and protect your posture

For many of us, the nine to five requires hours spent sitting at a desk and staring at a screen. That's good news for your social media presence, but less so for your posture and general mobility. Fortunately, while reducing desk time simply isn't an option for most, there are some quick-fix stretches you can do – on a daily basis and alongside regular movement breaks – to prevent all that sitting from causing too much damage.



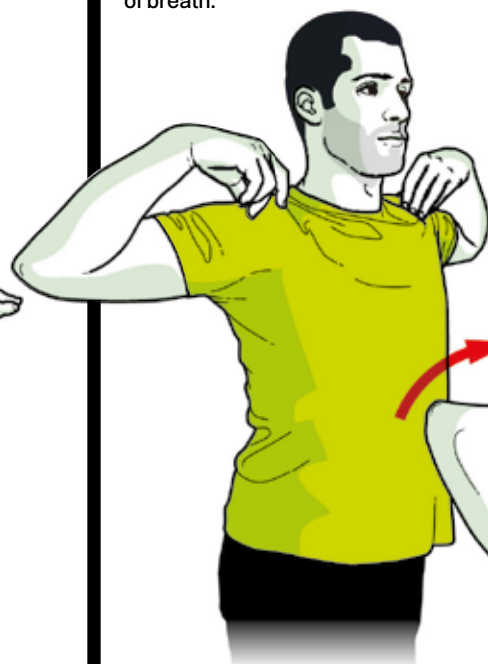
1. CHEST OPENERS

- Leaning forward over your keyboard can shorten the muscles in your chest and restrict your breath, affecting both mood and energy. This exercise aims to open the chest and encourage deep abdominal breathing.
- Relax your arms down by your sides.
- Bend your elbows at a 90-degree angle and rotate your palms to face the floor.
- Keep your elbows close to your ribs as you inhale and open the arms out to the sides.
- Exhale as you bring the arms back to centre.
- Repeat for five rounds of breath.
- Then repeat the exercise with palms facing up.



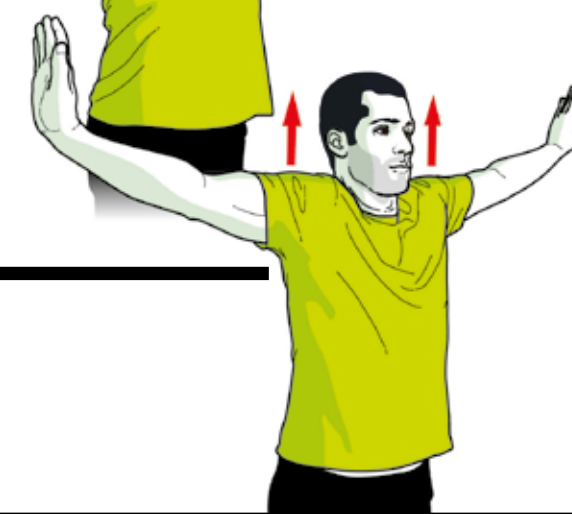
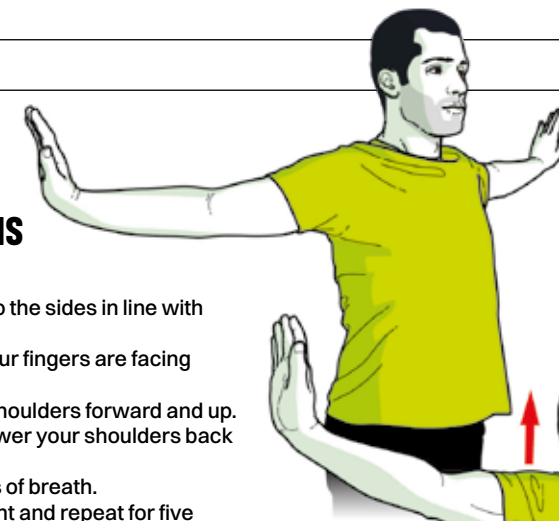
2. SHOULDER ROLLS

- When you experience stress it's very common to notice muscular tension in the neck, shoulders and upper back. These exercises (2 and 3) aim to release tight muscles in these problem areas.
- Place your hands on your shoulders, with elbows flared out to the sides.
- Inhale as you lift your shoulders forward and up.
- Exhale as you lower your shoulders back and down.
- Repeat for five rounds of breath.
- Reverse the movement and repeat for five more rounds of breath.



3. SHOULDER ROLLS WITH ARMS EXTENDED

- Raise your arms out to the sides in line with your shoulders.
- Flex your wrists so your fingers are facing the ceiling.
- Inhale as you lift the shoulders forward and up.
- Now exhale as you lower your shoulders back and down.
- Repeat for five rounds of breath.
- Reverse the movement and repeat for five rounds of breath.



4. SIDE NECK STRETCH

- Poor posture can cause the head and shoulders to drift forward. These exercises (4 and 5) aim to reduce pain in the neck by allowing the muscles to lengthen and the spine to realign.
- Place your right hand gently on the crown of your head, slowly turn your head to the right and look at your elbow.
- Inhale.
- Exhale as you gently lower your chin towards your right shoulder.
- Inhale as you lift your head, and stop once your chin is parallel to the floor. Repeat for five rounds of breath.
- Place your left hand gently on the crown of your head.
- Repeat the exercise on the left.



5. NECK STRETCH

- Interlace your fingers and place them gently on the back of your head.
- Keep your chin parallel to the floor and inhale.
- Exhale as you lower your chin to your chest.
- Inhale as you return your head to the starting position.

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SELF CARE

AS WELL AS REGULAR STRETCHING, TRY THE FOLLOWING TO REDUCE DESK-RELATED DISCOMFORT

1. SUPPORT YOURSELF

When sitting at your desk, ensure that your lower back is properly supported. Adjust your chair so your knees are slightly lower than your hips, with both feet resting fully on the floor.

2. LEVEL OUT

Keep your screen as close to the line of your eyes as possible to avoid neck strain.

3. MOVE MORE

Regular movement is key to maintaining a strong posture. Sitting down for prolonged periods can lead to back pain, stiffness in the hips and weakening of the muscles in your lower body. Take a short movement break at least every hour – half an hour if possible.

4. STAND UP

If you've got the budget and the space, investing in a standing desk might just be the best thing you can do to improve your work set-up. Standing ensures a naturally strong posture, not to mention a solid core and revved-up metabolism.