

Exercises at Your Desk by Susie Stewart

When you find yourself spending too much time in a chair at your desk, try these exercises to get your blood and oxygen flowing!

1. Push away from your desk, and sit at the edge of your chair. Firmly plant your feet, sit up straight by gently tucking your tail bone under. Relax your shoulders and arms, and then just let your chin nod towards your chest. Hold this position and let the weight of your head gently stretch your neck. Take several deep breaths through your nose and then gently blow out through your mouth. This breathing will lower your blood pressure and heart rate.
2. Tilt your right ear towards your right shoulder and continue the breathing. Keeping your eyes closed feels good too. Repeat to the left. Then return your chin towards your chest. If you are extremely tense, repeat this whole sequence again. Look up to a neutral position straight ahead.
3. Slowly start circling your shoulders making big full rotations and breathing deeply. After about 4 rotations, reverse in the opposite direction.
4. Drop both arms to your side with palms facing back and then with a deep breath, swing your arms to the front and stretch through to the ceiling growing as tall as you can and then swing towards the back and hold that stretch for a second and be sure to **KEEP YOU SHOULDERS DOWN**.
5. Flip the palms facing front and repeat above sequence.
6. Extend your arms out to the sides at shoulder height and bend your elbows so your fingertips are pointing to the ceiling and palms are facing front. Keeping your shoulders down, slowly close your palms and elbows together stretching the backs of your shoulders, and then open elbows back out to the side and pinch your shoulder blades together stretching the front of your shoulders and your chest. Inhaling in one direction and exhaling in the opposite one. Repeat 4-6 times
7. Drop your arms and shake the shoulders out and move your head from side to side.
8. Raise both arms up towards the ceiling as if you are scooping the air up and stretch as tall as you can while you take a big, deep breath. Exhale as you float your arms back down to your sides. Repeat 3-4 times
9. On the last one, leave arms up in the air and drop one to the side as the other stretches over your head and you lean carefully to one side. Reverse that and stretch in the opposite direction. Be sure to continue your rhythmic breathing. Repeat twice on each side.
10. Keeping your hips planted in your chair, rotate your torso by holding onto the arm or back of the chair to give yourself a gentle assisted stretch. Do 2 in each direction.
11. Keeping your spine straight, cross your right ankle over your left thigh (looks like the number 4) and gently press down on your right thigh. Then carefully, hinge at the hips and stretch forward still keeping the spine straight. Hold for a few seconds and then repeat. Switch legs and repeat on opposite side.
12. To get your blood circulating and your heart rate up, stabilize yourself on your chair, and then start "running in place." (Flintstone Exercise!) If you are able, start circling your forearms first in one direction and then in the other. Remember to keep breathing!! Repeat for however long you want, but don't fall off your chair!
13. Stand up, shake your legs out and catch your breath.

14. Stand either behind a stationary chair or put your hands on your desk. Separate your feet to about hip distance apart. Hinge at your hips bending toward the chair or your desk, and then start bending your knees and lead with your hips as if you are sitting down. Weight should be in your heels and you should be able to see your toes. From here, squat and raise yourself up squeezing your glutes. Repeat and do as many squats as you can tolerate. You should feel these in your legs and glutes, NOT your knees or lower back. Be sure to scoop your belly up and tuck your tailbone as you do these.

15. Shake your legs out and then keep your arms on chair or desk and walk yourself as far back as you can. Then drop your chest and push your hips back in the opposite direction to get a good hamstring and low back release.

16. Stand tall and scoop arms to the ceiling as you inhale and stretch tall. Exhale as you release arms to your sides. Repeat several times and then return to your chair.

17. Extend legs out in a wide, relaxed position and sit back in your chair. Point and flex your feet several times and then rotate your ankles in both directions. (If you can wiggle your toes, that feels good too)

18. Scoot back towards your desk and prop your elbows on the edge so you can lift your forearms. Make a fist with your hands and then slowly release the tension by stretching your fingers up and out as wide as you can. Wiggle your fingers and rotate your wrists in both directions. Repeat this several times.

19. End with Praying Hands: Arms and shoulders are relaxed with your palms touching and elbows to your side. Slowly, press your palms together as you raise your arms and try to touch your elbows together. Keep your shoulders down and inhale as you come up, and exhale as you separate elbows out to the side. Repeat several times and on the last one, drop your chin to your chest, look up, and then look from side to side and be thankful that you did something good for yourself!

20. Smile! It relaxes and stretches the muscles in your face and may cause happiness!