

## Stretch and Flex Program

An on site stretching program should encourage all employees to participate. Participation in the stretching programs should be conducted during the morning safety briefing. The stretch and flex component should not exceed 10 minutes. Employees should exercise judgment to the extent that their physical capabilities allow and they should not perform motions that may aggravate previous injuries or other physical conditions. A discussion with your medical provider is highly recommended before participating in any stretch & flex program.

Initially, your safety manager should conduct an introduction to the program and overview of strains and sprains. Subsequently, a designated volunteer should then lead the daily stretching program, at the start of the shift, by using the examples provided below. As mentioned above, the stretching should not exceed 10 minutes, and will typically last 5-10 minutes. During any of the stretch & flex exercises, you should never bounce or have quick movements. Only stretch to a point of mild tension.

### Introduction

The stretches diagramed on the subsequent page, can prepare the body for everyday work stresses. This is done through stretching and strengthening the specific muscles that are commonly associated with strains and sprains. If performed correctly and regularly, these exercises may reduce the incidences of muscle strain and sprains.

Stretching is important in maintaining the muscle's pliability and length. When a muscle shortens, the ability to perform a task involving that muscle decreases which can then increase the risk of injury. This is especially noticeable in the low back region. Tightness of the upper back, lower back, hamstrings, and calves can increase the risk of pain and injury to the spine. Maintaining the muscle's proper length and pliability allows the body to maintain the proper biomechanical position, and decreases the possibility for injury. Stretches should be performed slowly and deliberately.

Stretch, do not bounce, until mild tension is felt. Hold the stretch position 15 to 30 seconds. Then relax. Repeat stretches on the opposite side. You may choose to repeat the same stretch two or three times. All movements are gently but progressively increased. Remember "No quick or bouncy movements"! Be as relaxed as possible. It is easier to stretch and strengthen a relaxed muscle versus a tight one. Stretch until you feel mild tension. Never take a stretch past the point of tension strain or pain.

## Daily Stretch Routine

Hold for 15-30 seconds - Repeat each side

### Neck Stretch

- Tilt head sideways without twisting the neck.
- Using your hand, reach across head and move ear toward shoulder,
- Do not pull head, use weight of arm alone.
- Extend other arm.



### Thigh Stretch (Quadriceps)

- Lift one leg and grasp with your arm.
- Pull up on leg at ankle to stretch thigh.
- Maintain balance by extending your opposite arm sideways.



### Stretches inner thigh, groin

- Stand with feet pointed straight ahead, a little more than shoulder-width apart.
- Bend right knee slightly and move left hip downward toward right knee.



### Calf Stretch

- Get into a lunge position bending the back knee.
- Lift toes on your front leg and grasp them with your hand.



### Forearms and Wrist Stretch

- Extend one arm forward keeping the elbow straight.
- Bend the wrist upward, and use the other hand to gently pull fingers back toward you, stretching the muscles in the bottom of your forearm and wrist.
- Then release and bend the same wrist downward, gently pulling it down and toward you.



### Chest Pull

- Lace fingers together behind your back.
- Roll shoulders back while pulling hands back a few inches behind your back.



### Lower Back

- Stand upright with your feet shoulder width apart.
- Twist and lean forward to touch your toe with opposite hand.
- Extend other arm up into the air behind you.



### Shoulder and Back of Upper Arm Stretch

- Stand and place right hand on left shoulder.
- With left hand, pull right elbow across chest toward left shoulder and hold.

