

Regular exercise keeps your heart healthy and your weight in check. It even helps reduce stress. And that's not even the best news. You can find aerobic, strength-training and stretching opportunities while sitting at work or at home. Just remember to keep these tips in mind when starting your exercise routine:

1

Note that good back support is crucial during any exercise.

2

Stop doing an abdominal exercise if you experience pain or discomfort anywhere in your back.

3

Sit up straight with your feet flat on the floor.

4

Breathe deeply and rhythmically throughout the exercises. Never hold your breath.

5

Focus consciously on the muscles being stretched, strengthened or relaxed.



Stretching is just as important to good health as exercising. It promotes flexibility and range of motion in the joints. Try these exercises and stretches to be your healthy best:

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| <p>Ear-to-shoulder stretch: Allow your ear to drop toward one shoulder. Don't lift your shoulders to your ear. Hold for 5-10 seconds, continue breathing and enjoy the stretch.</p> | <p>Shoulder shrugs: Inhale and raise your shoulders toward your ears. Hold for a few seconds to "develop" the stretch. Exhale. Release and relax your shoulders.</p> |
| <p>Repeat 3 times for each side</p> | <p>Repeat 1-3 times</p> |
| <p>Hand rotations: Make light fists with your palms down. Slowly circle your fists in one direction 5-10 times. Slowly circle your fists in the other direction 5-10 times.</p> | <p>Point and flex your toes: Raise both legs (or just one leg at a time). Point toes away from you. Hold 1-2-3. Keep breathing. Pull toes back toward you. Hold 1-2-3. Enjoy the stretch.</p> |
| <p>5-10 times in both directions</p> | <p>Repeat 3-5 times</p> |
| <p>Knee lifts (while sitting straight): Raise both knees. Raise the right knee a bit higher than the left, alternate. Keep breathing. Continue marching movement for eight lifts, both sides. Feel your lower abs tighten.</p> | <p>Ab crunches: Sit back in your chair. Straighten your back. Crisscross your arms over your chest. Begin crunching abs by pushing your chest down and out a bit until you feel a tightening in your ab muscles. Return to sitting up straight again. Hold in your abs while crunching. You can also crunch your abs with your arms extended and crossed over one another at the elbows. Avoid lifting your arms above shoulder height.</p> |
| <p>Repeat 3-5 times</p> | <p>Repeat 6 times</p> |
| <p>Jackknife kicks: Sit near the edge of your chair and lean back, keeping your back straight. Let your shoulders lean on the back of the chair. Hold your knees and feet together and lift. Begin extending them, first to the side, then to the front and then to the other side. Repeat side-front-side and complete several sets of 6 reps. Pause to hold each position to maximize abdominal muscle strength.</p> | <p>Wall squats: This is a good strengthening exercise for your back, hips and legs. Stand with your back against a wall, heels about 18 inches from the wall, feet shoulder-width apart. Slide slowly down the wall into a crouch with knees bent to about 90 degrees. If this is too difficult, bend knees to 45 degrees and gradually build up from there. Count to five and slide back to the wall. Repeat five times. This is great for tightening the glutes; you'll notice a difference right away.</p> |
| <p>Hold each position for 6 seconds</p> | <p>Try doing 3 times every day</p> |

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