

Exercises for Computer Users “Drain the Strain”

Throughout the day it is important to take frequent breaks and change how you are using the muscles in your upper extremities.

Stretching your fingers, hands, shoulders, and neck helps muscles maintain their normal range of motion. When you use a muscle, you contract it. When it is contracted, it is shorter and firmer, which decreases the circulation to that muscle. When a muscle is tight and strained, it stays in this shortened state until you relax it back to its normal state. Stretching and lengthening a muscle can help keep it healthy. Contracting muscles that you do not use frequently helps keep a balance between your muscles.

Do these exercises throughout the day to help you “Drain the Strain.”

Keys to doing these stretches properly:

- Perform the stretches slowly and gently.
- Hold the position for just a few seconds. Relax between repetitions.
- Every exercise should feel good.
- You should feel a pleasant pull, **never pain**.
- If you feel any sensation of discomfort, no matter how slight, **stop**.
- **Try** the exercise **again**, only this time do it slower and do not stretch as far.

A. Neck Range of Motion

a) Head Tilts

1. Sit straight in your chair with your head in neutral position (Figure A).
2. Bring your ear to your shoulder without turning your head or lifting your shoulder (Figure B).
3. Hold for a count of 5.
4. Reverse direction (Figure C).
5. Repeat 5 times.



Figure A



Figure B



Figure C

b) Head Turns

1. Start with your head in neutral.
2. Without moving your chest or upper back, look all the way to the right (Figure D).
3. Then look all the way to the left (Figure E).
4. Repeat slowly 5 times.



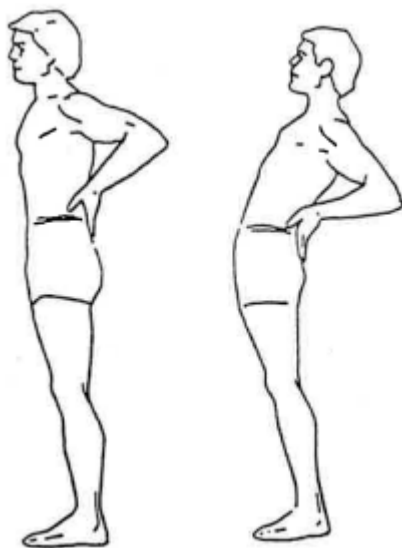
Figure D



Figure E

B. Standing Back Bend

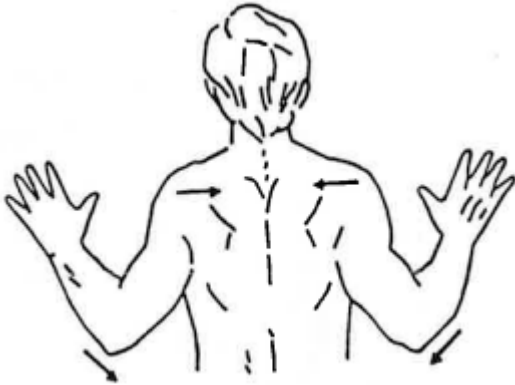
1. Stand with palms flat against the back of your hips, fingers pointing downward.
2. Gently lean back without causing pain.
3. Hold for 3 seconds.
4. Relax and repeat 6-8 times.



C. Elbows Into Back Pockets

1. Stand or sit erect in a chair.

2. Lift both palms up as if you were gesturing to stop traffic.
3. Move your elbows toward the back and downward, as if you were trying to tuck them into your back pockets. Your palms should be turned away from you. Don't start arching your spine! Keep chin tucked in.
4. Hold for about 10 seconds. Do often throughout the day.



D. Flowing Exercises of Shoulders, Elbows & Wrists

The next three exercises will help improve circulation in your wrist, arms, and shoulders. When you use your arms in one position for a long time, your circulation can't keep up with the need of your working tissue. Your body gives you warning signs of feelings of coldness, stiffness, and sometimes tightness in the hands and arms.

You may feel like you want to shake the hands to make them feel better. Instead of shaking the hands, it is better to do **gentle** motions that will improve your circulation without putting additional stress on the muscles and tendons.

These gentle motions should be done smoothly, within a **pain-free** range.

Pay attention to your response; your arms should feel warmer and more relaxed. If they feel worse, you were either too vigorous or placed your arms in a position that was uncomfortable to begin the flowing motion.

You can adapt the flowing exercise to fit your need. The following exercises are a starting point.

a) Shoulder

1. Relax your elbows so they are bent with your forearms at your side and your palms toward your body.
2. From this position, move your arms out to the side using your shoulder (like wings).
3. Repeat 6-8 times.



b) Elbow

1. Leave your wrists relaxed and bend your elbows so that your forearms are at your side with the palms turned up.
2. From this position, gently bend and straighten your elbow partway.
3. Repeat 6-8 times.



c) **Wrist**

1. Place your arms at your side, then gently wave your wrists back and forth.
2. Repeat 6-8 times.

E. **Open and Close Hand**

1. Make fist slowly with your thumb on the outside.
2. Open your hand **slowly** and spread your fingers.
3. Relax and repeat 6-8 times.



Check our **Website**: uhs.berkeley.edu to learn more about this and other medical concerns.
For **Appointments**: etang.berkeley.edu or call 510-642-2000 For **Advice**: call 510-643-7197