

Fitness and Workplace Health

Toolbox Talk #8



Warming up your body and stretching is important before a run, a basketball game, or any other strenuous activity. So why wouldn't it be important before you start your work activities? Pre-shift stretching and warmup exercises reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injuries by reducing fatigue, improving muscular balance and posture, and improving muscle coordination. Many of the jobs you perform require you work in not so ideal situations for your body. These situations can lead to injuries like strains, sprains, and dislocations. These activities include:

- **Working in awkward postures:** Bending, working overhead, kneeling, twisting, etc.
- **Repetitive Motion:** Working in the same position and doing the same movement over and over
- **Excessive Force:** Lifting something heavy, pushing or pulling heavy objects, using too small tools, etc.
- **Static Posture:** Postures or positions that a worker must hold for long periods of time

Although you may not be able to avoid these above situations, you can take proactive steps to maintaining your long-term health when regularly working in these situations. It is essential to do a few pre work stretches to keep your body up to the tasks asked of you.

Purposes of Stretching/Warming Up:

1. It prepares the body for work. Heating up the muscles prior to an activity is important to effectively utilize your mobility and flexibility.
2. It prepares you mentally. While stiffness and/or fatigue may be a problem, a lack of alertness or focus on the job is also a contributing factor
3. It reduces preventable injuries such as strains, sprains, and dislocations from overexertion or repetitive motion



Areas to concentrate on when stretching:

- **Neck:** Try sitting straight and tucking your chin towards your chest and holding it for a few seconds
- **Shoulders:** Bring your shoulders up toward your ears. Hold for 5 seconds and slowly roll them back and down
- **Arms:** Extend your arms to the side and slightly behind you. Gently try to squeeze your shoulder blades together and hold for 5 seconds. Then bring your arms forward and out and touch the backs of your hands together
- **Hands:** Try giving yourself a quick hand massage by massaging both the palm and the back of the hand
- **Back:** Stand up straight and reach with both hands toward the sky. Look at your hands and hold for 15-30 seconds. Also try putting your hands on your hips and slowly bending backwards.
- **Legs:** Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and squat down with your elbows on your knees. Slowly straighten your legs while your elbows are still on your knees and hold for 15 seconds.

Information retrieved from emcins.com

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