



Health & Care

Wellness

# Bupa break stretches





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Sedentary behaviour has been found to have potential health issues. So how do we prevent this when work or study requires a lot of sitting or standing? Using these exercises in this booklet is a good start as they are designed to be easily done at work, home, or school - whatever position you are in!

### Top tips

- Start by doing the exercises gently, at a level you are comfortable with.
- Aim to feel a mild strain rather than pain.

You will soon be able to increase how far you move and stretch with practice. These exercises will help to “wake up” muscles that don’t get much activity in sedentary positions and to stretch muscles at risk of getting tight.

Remember to keep up the incidental exercise throughout your day.

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Sitting exercises

# Slump stretch

Benefits of this exercise:

This exercise increases flexibility throughout the spine and the legs, decreasing the likelihood of back pain, headaches and leg pain.

How to do this exercise:

This stretch can be felt anywhere from the calves right up to the neck, depending on where you are tight.



Sit comfortably on the seat.



Stretch your legs out in front of you maintaining a slight bend in your knees. Reach forward with both arms to grasp the balls of your feet with your hands.



Straighten your legs slightly till you feel a slight stretch in the back of your legs and then slump your forehead down towards your knees. Hold this pose for 20 seconds and repeat it twice.

## Sitting exercises

# Neck stretch

## Benefits of this exercise:

This exercise increases the flexibility of the neck muscles and, as long as it's done gently, can decrease muscle tension around the neck and shoulder area thereby decreasing the likelihood of neck pain and headaches.

## How to do this exercise:

This stretch should be felt in the left side of the neck.



Sit comfortably on the seat with your back supported. Sit up straight and tuck your chin in slightly.



With your right arm reach right over the back of your head and gently tilt your head forwards and to the right. Only a small movement is required. Try to maintain your chin tuck throughout the stretch.



Ensure your left shoulder remains relaxed and doesn't hitch up as you are doing this stretch. As soon as you feel a mild stretch on the left side of the neck, pause and hold this pose for 20 seconds. Repeat twice for both the right and left sides.

## Sitting exercises

# Arm outward stretch

## Benefits of this exercise:

This exercise increases nerve flexibility in the arms which decreases the likelihood of wrist and elbow pain. It also helps promote better posture and increased circulation to the upper body and arms.

## How to do this exercise:

This stretch should be felt as a mild tingling feeling through the forearms and hands.



Ensure you have at least an arm's length of space either side of you for this exercise. Sitting well supported and upright, hold your arms in the "I don't know" position with your elbows bent, palms up to the ceiling and fingers pointing away from you.



From this position slowly stretch your arms out to the side until the arms are straight and horizontal to the floor. In the meantime point your fingers down to the floor so that the palms are pushing out away from you.



Hold this end position for three seconds and then slowly return to the starting position. Repeat this exercise ten times. If your arms become sore and heavy you may need a rest break mid-way through.

Leg exercises in standing

## Heel & toe rocking

Benefits of this exercise:

This exercise promotes increased circulation to the lower legs decreasing the likelihood of varicose veins and Deep vein thrombosis.

How to do this exercise:



Stand upright, and keeping your knees and hips stable.



Rock your bodyweight forward onto your toes and forefoot while lifting your heels slightly off the floor.



Hold this position momentarily before rocking back slowly onto your heels while lifting your toes off the floor. Ensure you maintain your balance throughout the exercise. Repeat this ten times.

You should feel your calf muscles working to control this exercise as you raise the heels and the calf will feel slightly stretched as you raise the toes.

Leg exercises in standing

## Knee squats

Benefits of this exercise:

This exercise increases strength in the quadriceps and gluteal muscles along with some core stability. This decreases the likelihood of knee, hip or back pain.

How to do this exercise:



Stand upright with your feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart. Turn your toes outward slightly. Brace your abdominal muscles gently by drawing your belly button up and in towards your spine.



Bend the knees slowly until the front of your knees are level with the front of your toes.



Then slowly return to your starting position. Maintain a stable and upright upper body throughout the exercises. Repeat this ten times.

You should feel your thigh muscles working as you do this exercise.

## Leg exercises in standing

# Lunge stretches

## Benefits of this exercise:

This exercise increases strength in the quadriceps and the core stabilisers, and helps improve flexibility in the calf muscles. This decreases the likelihood of knee, ankle or back pain.

## How to do this exercise:



Place one foot in front of the other in a lunge stance, ensuring you remain well balanced. Have the feet pointing forwards on the front and the back foot.



Shift your weight onto the front foot allowing this front knee to bend slightly, until the front of your knee is level with the front of your toes. Meanwhile with your back foot keep the heel on the floor allowing a mild stretch along the back of the calf.



Hold this position for ten seconds and then repeat this with the opposite leg in front. Maintain a stable and upright upper body throughout the exercises. Repeat this four times on each side.

You should feel a stretch in your calf muscles as you do this exercise, and will feel your thigh muscles working to maintain the pose.



Leg exercises in standing

## Hip sideways

Benefits of this exercise:

This exercise increases strength in the hip stabiliser muscles along with some core stability. This decreases the likelihood of hip or back pain.

How to do this exercise:



Stand upright with a stable support close at hand to the side. Take your weight onto the leg closest to the support.



Hold onto that support with one hand and lift the opposite leg up in a sideways direction. Keep that leg straight and the foot pointed forwards. Move to whatever angle feel comfortable and allows you to keep standing upright. Hold at this outer point for 3 seconds and then slowly return to the starting point.



Repeat this ten times each side.

You will feel the muscles on the side of your hip region working as you perform this exercise.

Arm & upper body exercises in standing

## Sideways stretches

### Benefits of this exercise:

This exercise increases your back flexibility, along with promoting some strength in the hip stabiliser muscles and core stabilisers. This decreases the likelihood of hip or back pain.

### How to do this exercise:



Stand upright with your feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart. Have your weight evenly distributed between the two sides.



Place your arms down along your side, and then stretch down to the left side, reaching your left hand towards the outside of your left knee, or as far as comfortable. Slowly return to the starting position and then repeat for the opposite side.



Repeat this ten times on each side, keeping your head facing forwards throughout the exercises.

This stretch should be felt in the side of the back and the side of the hip area. It is possible to also feel a stretch in the inner thigh.

## Arm raises

### Benefits of this exercise:

This exercise increases the arm range of movement as well as promoting better posture and increased circulation to the upper body and arms.

### How to do this exercise:



Sit comfortably and ensure you are well supported in the middle of the seat.



Stretch your arms in front of you leading with the thumbs. Try to maintain an upright posture throughout the exercise as you reach both arms simultaneously as far as you are comfortable.



At the top of your range hold for three seconds and then slowly lower the arms again. Repeat this ten times.

This stretch should be felt in the upper back and the shoulder area.



Arm & upper body exercises in standing

## Back arches

### Benefits of this exercise:

This exercise increases your upper and lower back flexibility along with promoting improved posture. This reduces the likelihood of back pain.

### How to do this exercise:



This stretch should be felt in the lower back and possibly in the abdominal area.

Stand upright with your feet shoulder width apart. Have your weight evenly distributed between the two sides. Bring your hands to waist level.

Gently and slowly arch your back, with the pivot point of the movement being where your hands are on your waist.

When you get to the end of your comfortable range of movement, pause momentarily before returning to the starting point. Repeat this exercise ten times.

Arm & upper body exercises in standing

## Back twists

Benefits of this exercise:

This exercise increases the flexibility throughout the spine and decreases the likelihood of back pain, neck pain and headaches.

How to do this exercise:



Sit comfortably on the front of the seat with a gap between your back and the back of the chair. Have your knees and hips at right angles and your feet supported on the floor.



Cross your arms lightly in front of your chest and slowly twist your upper body from side to side as far as comfortable. Allow your neck to also twist slightly in the same direction as your trunk.



Repeat this exercise ten times in each direction. Starting gently and slowly increasing the range of the stretch within comfort limits.

This stretch can be felt anywhere along the spine from the lower back to the neck, depending on where you are tight.