

ERGONOMICS FOR EVERYONE

Hairdressers, athletes, construction workers, delivery people ... no one is immune from stress and strain on the body. An ergonomic work environment can help you feel better, work more efficiently and avoid injury, no matter what your job. Here are some helpful hints:

- ✓ **Use the right tools and keep them in working order.**
Tools that are in good repair and right for the job reduce strain on muscles and joints.
- ✓ **Listen to your body.**
If you feel pain, numbness, stiffness or soreness in any body part, take it as a sign to adjust your work environment to make it more ergonomically correct.
- ✓ **Exercise regularly.**
Keeping your body in shape makes you more resistant to work-related injury.
- ✓ **Regulate temperature when possible.**
Being too cold puts extra stress on muscles and joints. If you can't control the temperature of your workplace, wear layered clothing, so you stay comfortable.
- ✓ **Check your posture.**
Allow your spine to be in a natural position as you work — don't sit or stand stiffly straight or slouch. Keep your chin level so your head does not tilt up or down for long periods of time while working.

The goal: No matter what your workplace, arrange it so you feel comfortable, and you don't have to reach, strain or struggle.

Turn the Tables on Stress

Living in today's fast-paced world means you are under constant pressure. A little stress is a good thing — it can make you feel energized and alive, and keep you sharp and focused.

But too much stress can take a toll on your health, making you exhausted and irritable, giving you headaches, disrupting your sleep, even putting you at higher risk for illness. You can't get away from stress. But you can learn how to manage it better and avoid stress-related health problems.

Try these strategies:

■ **Take time out.** Take advantage of your break time during the day. Stretch, rest your eyes and walk around. Let your body and mind relax for a few minutes.

■ **Take deep breaths.** When you're under stress, your breathing speeds up and becomes more shallow, and your heart races. Close your eyes and take eight or nine deep, slow breaths all the way down into your stomach. You'll feel your pulse begin to slow down.

■ **Take an "imagi-cation."** Close your eyes and imagine a peaceful scene where you would enjoy being. It could be the ocean, a mountaintop or a quiet wood. Engage all five of your senses. Hear the calming crash of the waves ... see the majestic splendor of a mountain range ... smell the aromatic pine needles ... feel the breeze on your face.

Ten minutes and you'll feel refreshed.



Fitness at Work



Simple Stretches for Wherever You Are

Keeping your body flexible, strong and healthy means you're more resistant to work-related aches, pains and injury. Some easy stretches can be done anytime and just about anywhere.

Hands and wrists. Holding your arms out in front of you, bend your wrists for five seconds, then bend them for five. Repeat several times. Make soft fists and rotate your wrists a few times in each direction.

Back. Let your arms hang at your sides. Arch your back, pushing your shoulders back and looking up toward the ceiling. Then round your back forward, tucking your tailbone under and dropping your chin toward your chest. Move slowly and repeat several times. Be sure to keep breathing!

Neck and shoulders. Drop your left ear toward your right shoulder and hold for a few seconds, then switch sides. Drop your chin toward your chest, then raise your head and look over each shoulder. Shrug your shoulders up toward your ears, then release them.

Foot and legs. If your job requires you to stand for extended periods, raise yourself up on your toes for a few seconds, then lower back down. Lift each foot and circle the ankle a few times in each direction, then flex and point your foot. Shake out your legs, letting your feet dangle loose.

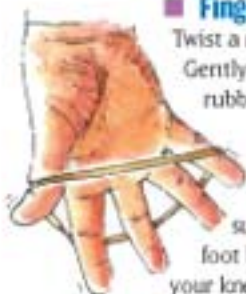
Feeling better already, aren't you?

Fast Fitness for Right Now

No time to exercise? Try these "toners" anytime, anywhere.

■ Finger Flexer

Twist a rubber band around all five fingers of one hand. Gently spread your fingers wide apart against the rubber band's resistance. Relax and repeat.



■ Hamstring Curls

Stand straight, holding something stable for support (such as the back of a chair). Lift one foot behind you as high as possible by bending your knee. Hold ... then lower the foot to the floor. Repeat with the other foot.



■ Leg Lifts

Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Without moving your thigh, raise one foot by straightening your knee. Hold ... then bring the foot back down. Repeat with the other foot.



■ Wise Walking

Building to building or office to office, take longer, quicker strides, swing your arms as you go and use stairs whenever possible. You'll boost the intensity of this "aerobic" exercise and burn more calories. **Plus:** You'll get where you're going sooner. (And you thought you didn't have time to exercise!)

Try This

Next time you're about to throw out a sheet of paper — such as a used envelope, fax cover sheet or newspaper insert — work in a little workout. Using one hand, hold the paper by a corner with your arm outstretched ... then crumple it into a small ball as fast as you can.

Benefit: You'll strengthen your forearm, wrist and hand grip — and even help prevent some common wrist problems such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

SITTING DOWN?

Did you know your body burns 50–100 calories an hour even when you're sitting still? Just imagine what a little exercise can do.

An Apple a Day? It's True!

Looking for a quick energy-boosting food that tastes great and is cholesterol free, almost always low in fat and loaded with nutrients? How about fruit?

Not only may an apple a day help keep the doctor away, it may help you live longer.

In a British study, people who ate fruit often were far less likely to die from stroke and heart disease than those who ate fruit less than once a day.

So try packing a serving or two with lunch: an apple, pear or banana; grapefruit or melon wedge; a bottle of fruit juice; or a half cup of berries. After lunch, skip dessert and bite into a sweet, juicy mango or cantaloupe wedge. Then wash dinner down with a tall glass of juice. Enjoy!