Benefits of Regular Stretching

1. **Increased Flexibility** and Joint Range of Motion: Flexible muscles may improve your coordination and daily performance. May decrease risk of repetitive motion injuries and muscular micro-trauma.

2. **Improved Circulation**: Increases blood flow to muscles, bringing nourishment and removing waste by-products. This process speeds rejuvenation and healing of tissues.

3. **Better Posture**: Regular stretching keeps muscles from getting tight—which improves posture and minimizes aches and pains.

4. **Stress Relief**: Stretching, accompanied by deep breathing, loosens tense muscles and gets more oxygen into the bloodstream. This relaxes you and relieves stress symptoms.

5. **Enhanced Coordination**: Full joint range of motion improves balance.

**Tips for Safe & Effective Stretching**

- If you have any health concerns that may limit your ability to safely perform warm-up or stretching exercises, consult your physician before participation in a warm-up or stretching program.
- Warm up before stretching (i.e.: short power walk, arm and wrist circles, work activity). Never stretch cold muscles.
- Stretch in a safe area (i.e.: low traffic, away from machinery).
- Stretch for at least 3-5 minutes before your shift starts, on your breaks and after your shift ends.
- Stretch after a workout or rigorous physical activity.
- Keep your movements gentle and breathe freely while you hold a stretch – don’t hold your breath.
- Hold each stretch for 10-30 seconds, or 5-10 seconds with multiple reps.
- **DO NOT BOUNCE** when you stretch – keep a static stretch!
- Stretch to the point of tension, NOT pain.
- Do not do any stretches that hurt, or that a medical professional has told you not to do.
- Stay hydrated throughout the day – water is best!
- **Avoid caffeine and nicotine to help improve your circulation.**
Sample Stretches

**Hands:**

1. Hold arms down at sides and gently shake out the hands.
2. Spread fingers apart until you feel a stretch in the hand...
3. With fingers apart and wrists straight, bend fingers at middle knuckle until you feel a stretch.

**Wrists/Forearms:**

1. Straighten arm in front of you. Gently pull hand back toward you until you feel a stretch. (Repeat – other side.)
2. Straighten arm in front of you. Gently push hand down until you feel a stretch. (Repeat – other side.)
3. Hold arms straight down at sides. Make gentle fists and curl hands in at wrists until you feel a stretch in tops of your forearms.

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Arms/Shoulders/Neck:

- Straighten arm against stationary object/ wall. Push gently against object as you turn slightly away until you feel a bicep stretch.
- Straighten arm across chest and gently pull arm toward you with your opposite arm until you feel a stretch. (Repeat – other side.)
- Straighten arm down at side and GENTLY pull or tilt head toward opposite shoulder. (Repeat – other side.)

Chest/Side/Back:

- Clasp hands in back of you, pull shoulders back, and raise hands up until you feel a stretch in the chest.
- Clasp hands over your head, keep back straight, and bend gently to the side until you feel a stretch. (Repeat – other side.)
- Sit on ground or in chair and hug one leg in/ up to your chest until you feel a low back stretch. Put head down and pull shoulders forward for upper/ full back stretch.

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