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:**

Hold arms down at sides and gently shake out the hands.

Spread fingers apart until you feel a stretch in the hand...

With fingers apart and wrists straight, bend fingers at middle knuckle until you feel a stretch.

**Wrists/Forearms:**

Straighten arm in front of you. Gently pull hand back toward you until you feel a stretch. (Repeat – other side.)

Straighten arm in front of you. Gently push hand down until you feel a stretch. (Repeat – other side.)

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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Legs/Feet:

- Put one leg straight out in front of you while pushing your butt back (like sitting in a chair) until you feel a stretch in the back of the straight leg. Rest hands on bent leg or stationary object for.

- Push against a stationary object/ wall and straighten one leg behind you. Press heel down until you feel a stretch in the calf and ankle. Bend that same knee and lift heel while keeping toes on ground to stretch your foot. (Repeat – other side).

- Lean against a stationary object/ wall. Bend opposite knee and gently pull up/ back on leg while keeping back straight until you feel a stretch in the front thigh. Tuck hips forward for a deeper stretch to the thigh. (Repeat – other side).