

It is easy to settle into an unbalanced or inefficient working posture when undertaking keyboard, mouse and display screen work. A good working posture, as explained in the University Policy and Guidance for the Safe Use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE/VDUs), can help to prevent musculoskeletal aches and pains. However, postural stress and strains can still occur after a period of time without a break; pause gymnastics can help in these situations.

Pause gymnastics are low impact exercises, they move joints and stretch the muscles and nerves; this increases flexibility and muscle tone by stimulating the circulation, lubricating the joints and relieving muscle and nerve tightness. The simple movements can be undertaken at the desk.

### **Before you stretch**

You should be in good health to conduct these stretches. If you are in any doubt, due to a pre-existing medical condition, seek medical advice first.

### **How often to stretch?**

Undertake the stretches regularly. Every 10 minutes take a short break for a minute and perform one or two of the stretches; this is much more beneficial in relieving fatigue than longer breaks taken less frequently. Try to make the exercises automatic, so you do not have to think about undertaking them.

### **How to stretch**

Start with a good posture – back straight, shoulders level and head central with your chin tucked in. Stretch gently, smoothly and slowly until you feel a stretching sensation in the desired muscle. Hold the stretch for 10-15 seconds, then slowly release.

**DO NOT FORCE THE STRETCH OR BOUNCE. IF YOU FEEL ANY PAIN, YOU SHOULD STOP.**

### **Neck exercises**

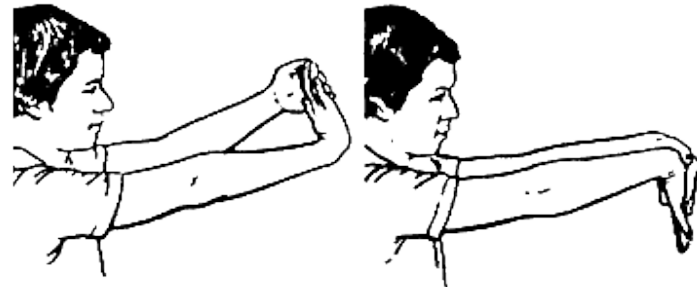
To be undertaken in a sitting position, initially in front of a mirror. Repeat each of these 3 times, at least 3 times a day:

1. Shrug shoulders upwards for a count of 5, then relax.
2. Roll shoulders in circles.
3. Take your chin and head down towards your chest to make a double chin.
4. Stretch your head backwards. To support your head interlace your fingers behind your neck also.
5. Rotate your head towards the left as far as is comfortable and repeat to the opposite side.
6. Keeping your head straight, take your right ear down towards your right shoulder and repeat to the opposite side.
7. Keeping your head straight, draw it back as far as possible with your chin level, then relax (the 'chicken shift' exercise).

### **Wrist and hand exercises**

Repeat each of these 5 times, at least 3 times a day:

1. Make a fist and then stretch fingers out.
2. Stretch fingers out widely.
3. Bend wrist upwards (extension) and hold for a count of 5, shake out in between.
4. Bend wrist downwards (flexion) and hold for a count of 5, shake out in between.



5. Move the wrist from side to side.

### **Other exercises**

1. Reach-ups – Interlace your fingers and turn your palms outwards. Reach upwards so that the palms face the ceiling. Reach gently backwards as far as is comfortable to increase the stretch.
2. Reach-outs - Interlace your fingers and turn your palms forwards. Push out as far as is comfortable, allowing the shoulders to round forwards.
3. Chest stretch - Interlace your fingers behind your back. Straighten the arms, turning your elbows slightly in and squeezing your shoulder blades together. Gently raise your arms to increase the stretch if comfortable.
4. Back flexion – Using your hands on your knees for support, slowly lean forwards. Allow your hands to slide down the lower legs to stretch your back. Use your arms as supports to sit upright.
5. Back extension – Sit upright or stand. Place the palms of your hands into the small of your back and push your hips forwards and your shoulders back, arching the spine gently.

### **For further advice or questions, please contact:**

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Occupational Health and  
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## **Occupational Health**

## **Pause Gymnastics**

**OHL05**