

Tethered To Your Desk...?

Yoga Poses / Stretches for the Office Worker

Use these poses to relieve tension in your back, shoulders, and wrists while working.

Seated Chair Twist

When you sit for an extended period of time, twists help to release and ease tension along the spine.

Sit toward the front edge of your chair... then swivel your thighs toward the right side of the chair so you are sitting diagonally (or to the side) on the seat. *(If you have an arm rest, bring your thighs as close to it as possible.)* Inhale, lift your right arm up to the sky, grow your spine tall ... and with an exhalation, move your arm to the back of the chair on the opposite side, taking hold of the chair back. Bring your left hand to the right knee, arm rest, or chair back. Inhale and lengthen your spine. Exhale, gently twist to the right, as you press your right hand against the back of the chair to deepen the twist. Draw the shoulder blades down your back and breathe into your rib cage. With each exhalation, try to twist just a tiny bit farther. Stay in the pose for 5-10 breaths. Exhale as you release and return to center. Switch sides.

Easy Side Bend

This is a great way to relieve computer-related tension in your wrists as well as provides a nice stretch to your sides (which helps to relieve lower back pain and tightness).

Stand with your feet hip-width apart. As you inhale, stretch your arms out to the sides and over your head, palms facing each other. Exhale, and take hold of your left wrist (with your right hand). Inhale, lengthen the sides of your body, reach arms up to the sky... Exhale, gently stretch to the right, feeling the stretch in the entire left side of the body as you draw out your left arm and wrist, and simultaneously move your hips to the left slightly. Be sure to keep your head and left arm in alignment with the torso. Try not to drop your left arm in front of your face, heart rolls up toward the sky. Keep your feet grounded equally, especially your left heel. Hold for a few breaths ... and then inhale as you come back to center. Pause briefly and notice the difference in the sides. Repeat on opposite side.

Seated Back Release

Excellent for relieving tension along the spine and in the neck.

Sit on the edge of your chair and place your feet a little greater than hip-width apart, parallel to each other. Lean forward and place your forearms on your thighs. Press down with your forearms and lengthen the spine forward. Try to draw your belly onto the tops of your thighs without the back rounding. Breathe deeply, working to lengthen the spine for a few breaths. When you're ready to proceed, exhale, and stretch your arms down toward the floor, resting your ribs on the tops of your thighs. Cross your arms, placing hands on opposite elbows. Continue to breathe deeply as you allow the spine and neck to decompress. To go a little deeper, straighten and stretch your arms forward on the floor, reaching through the fingertips and feeling your spine and sides of the body lengthening. Keep neck relaxed. To come out of the pose, inhale and round your back, slowly rolling up to a sitting position. Close your eyes and savor.

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Shoulder Rolls

If you've been sitting in the same position for awhile, this particular movement will help to relieve tension in the upper back and shoulders.

Sit tall and inhale as you lift your right shoulder up to your right ear (keeping your head balanced on top of the spine). Then exhale as you slowly roll your shoulder around and back, dropping it away from your ear. Continue rolling shoulders three more times, alternating right and left. Then try a few rounds with both shoulders moving in unison. As you roll the shoulders back, focusing on squeezing the shoulder blades together as you drag them down your spine – and then reverse direction.

Now, inhale and lift both shoulders up to the ears... and exhale as you drop and release them quickly. Repeat a few more times and then relax your shoulders completely.

Neck Stretch

This stretch is excellent in relieving tension or stiffness in the neck. It helps to lengthen the neck by creating space between each of the vertebrae in the cervical spine.

Sit tall at the edge of your chair. Align your head directly on top of your spine and feel the crown of your head lifting toward the sky. Place your left hand onto the edge of the chair seat (if possible). Inhale, and with the exhalation, melt your right ear toward your right shoulder (avoid lifting your right shoulder or turning your head). Take several breaths in this position, feeling the neck lengthening on the left. To increase the stretch, reach your right hand up and over your head, resting it on the left side of your jawline. Do not pull on your neck – rather let the weight of the hand gently increase the stretch. While holding onto the chair seat with your left hand, draw your left shoulder blade down your back.

Visualize your neck lengthening and the fibers along your vertebrae relaxing and letting go. Hold the pose for 5-10 breaths. Then, as you exhale, release your top arm and mindfully roll your chin toward your chest. Inhale and slowly lift your head back up on top of your spine. Close your eyes for a few moments and feel the difference between the sides of your neck. Repeat to the opposite side. When finished, gently massage your neck and shoulders.

Chest Expander

This pose helps expand the chest, which decreases rounded shoulders, and releases tightness in the middle back. Also helps to decrease kyphosis (extreme forward curvature) of the thoracic spine.

With your feet planted firmly on the ground hip-width apart, sit near the edge of your chair. Place your hands near the back edge of the chair seat (hold back edge if possible), bend your elbows slightly and squeeze your shoulder blades toward one another. As you inhale, expand your chest up toward the sky (puff up your chest), and then arch back slightly, keep the spine tall. Keep neck relaxed, chin toward chest, shoulders down and chest lifted - feeling the skin across the heart stretching. Watch your chest as you breathe and notice how it lifts up toward the sky as you inhale. Try to maintain the length as you exhale. Hold for a few breaths and then exhale and release.

