



## **Stretching for Safety and Health**

Stretching is one of the most important things employees can do for themselves while on the job. Some workplaces have morning stretching routines and others encourage staff to take part in regular intervals of stretching throughout the day. Either way, it is an immensely valuable activity for anyone in any setting.

The longer you sit or stand without breaks, the greater the risk for developing muscle tension, stiffness and strain of the neck, arms, wrists, hands, back or legs. Further, the more time the discomfort has to develop, the greater the risk and severity of a work-related injury.

Ideally, every employee has a five-minute stretching break for every one hour of work. For those working at a desk, it is important to get up and move during this brief period. For those who stand for the majority of the day, the opposite is true. Taking a break to sit during this rest period is critical to reduce stress on the legs, feet and lower back.

### *Examples of workplace stretches*

#### **Neck**

Tilt your head to the right and left, slowly, while looking straight ahead.

Move your head forward until your chin touches your chest, then backward until looking at the ceiling.

Hold stretches 15-20 seconds, maximum.

#### **Shoulders**

Slowly raise one shoulder up and gradually work into a circular motion. Roll the shoulder backwards five times then forward five times. Repeat on opposite shoulder.

#### **Wrist**

Slowly bend one hand back and forth using your other hand. Hold for 10-15 seconds.

Rotate wrists in a circular motion, clockwise and counterclockwise.

#### **Legs**

While seated, raise one leg at a time in front of the body. Hold for 10 seconds on each leg.

By stretching and maintaining flexibility of the joints, employees will prevent muscle shortening and maintain a full range of motion. Keeping the body in top condition will help employees work more safely and efficiently with fewer absences.

**For assistance in developing a more comprehensive stretching plan for your employees, contact Sharon Rateike, corporate wellness program coordinator at (920) 568-5018 or [Sharon.Rateike@forthc.com](mailto:Sharon.Rateike@forthc.com).**

