Workstation **Ergonomics**

EXERCISES AT YOUR COMPUTER

Health Promotion in the Canadian Forces
STRENGTHENING THE FORCES
ENERGISER LES FORCES
Promotion de la santé dans les Forces canadiennes

Canada

Introduction

As the result of the computer revolution, many of us sit at desks working at computers for most of the day.

Many of us have discovered this type of work has its own problems. Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs) including computer related problems such as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome; inflammation of the muscles and tendons of the wrists, hands and arms; neck and shoulder stiffness; low back pain; and stiff muscles and joints have risen dramatically since the 1990's These conditions can be the body's response to repetitive, prolonged computer work.

Our bodies were designed to move—not sitting for long periods of time!

IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE DEVELOPED OR ARE DEVELOPING AN RSI, SEE YOUR HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONER FOR ASSISTANCE.
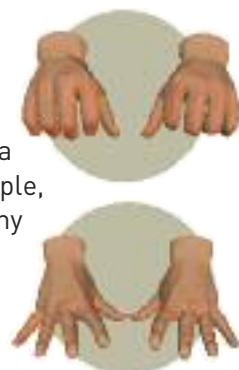
Exercises

Stretching is an easy way to help the body cope with the physical stresses of sitting and working at a computer for a long time. It is simple, it can be done almost anywhere/any time, and it doesn't require any equipment. The benefits of stretching include:

• Decreased stresses on joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles;
• Improved blood flow to muscles, joints, tendons and ligaments;
• Decreased tension and stress;
• Increased mental alertness;
• Decreased injury risk;
• MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER!

It only takes 1–2 minutes.

How to:

1. Breathe easily.
2. Do the exercise until you feel a mild tension in the muscle and hold the stretch for 5 deep breaths.
3. Now stretch a bit more and hold for another 5 deep breaths.
4. Relax.

Always:

• Stretch only within your comfortable limits, not into pain.
• Breathing should be slow and relaxed.
• Hold the stretch 15-20 seconds– don't bounce.
• Do a different exercise/stretch every hour you work at your computer.

The antidote for sitting is moving!

• take a mini walk
• stand up to talk on the phone
• use the stairs
• get up from your desk at lunch time
• walk to talk to someone—don't email
• get off the bus 1-2 blocks before your regular stop and walk to work or home
• exercise regularly—be FIT

To avoid RSI

• use a natural joint position
• don't strangle (tight grip) the mouse
• don't pound the keys
• take stretch breaks
• take eye rest breaks from looking at the monitor when you stretch
• make sure your work-station/ chair is adjusted to suit you.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE INJURY PREVENTION SPECIALIST AT DIRECTORATE FORCE HEALTH PROTECTION STRENGTHENING THE FORCES OR YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER.

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