

Stretching

Athletes, animals and even children do it. Everyone understands why we should stretch, despite this understanding, stretching has yet to become a common sight in the workplace.

The reasons you should stretch:

1. Stretching reduces muscle fatigue.
2. Stretching reduces muscle discomfort.
3. Stretching makes it easier to move.
4. Stretching balances the body.

Stretching during the day allows your body to recover from the demands of work. People need to ask themselves, "Am I getting paid to accumulate fatigue and discomfort as a part of my job?" Imagine an employee saying, "My back and legs are getting tired so I think I'll take this fatigue home with me". While this sounds ridiculous, it is true that people frequently take home much of the fatigue and discomfort they could leave at work if they performed simple and brief stretches throughout their shift.

Muscle fatigue is due to:

- A build-up of waste products that develop in working muscles.
- An inability for oxygen to get into the muscle.

Stretching promotes a cleansing process by flushing out waste products and improving the flow of blood and oxygen into the muscle. Stretching literally helps your muscles breathe and allows the muscle to work more efficiently. While no one would consider holding their breath while they work, using your muscles all day without stretching is like holding a muscle's breath. Once the muscle breathes, work can continue. This technique of letting the muscle breathe is easily accomplished by stretching throughout the day.



STRETCHING

Talking Notes

POINTS TO REVIEW

1. Bodies are designed for movement and stretching is the body's natural way of keeping itself moving.

Stretching is a normal activity that we forget about as we age. We wonder if it is appropriate or not and in fact, it is the first thing our body automatically does when we get out of bed in the morning.

2. Simple stretches bring oxygen to the muscles so they can work more efficiently.

Our bodies require oxygen in the muscles in order to work efficiently. Breathing oxygen into the lungs is only part of the process. We also need to deliver it to the working muscle. When muscle is fatigued, it has to work harder to perform the same amount of work. It becomes more difficult for oxygen to get to the muscle. The best way to deliver this oxygen is to perform a simple stretch.

3. Simple stretches reduce muscle fatigue.

Much of the fatigue you experience at the end of the day can be reduced or eliminated by performing simple stretches throughout the day.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can stretching improve our ability to perform work?

2. If I take a deep breath, does that guarantee that the oxygen I take in will reach my back, shoulders, and legs? If not . . . how can I ensure that it does?

3. Is stretching at the beginning of my shift enough?

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