Time to Stretch

Stretching exercises bring much needed blood flow to tired muscles, and can aid in improving and maintaining range of motion in your joints.

Be sure to know your limitations, such as past or present injuries to muscles or joints, as this may limit your ability to perform some stretches.

Check with your health care provider for what is appropriate for you.

Ahhh... Relaxed Breathing.

- Breathe in through your nose.
- Count to five and let your abdomen fill with air.
- Breathe out through pursed lips as you count to five.
- Do this deep breathing 2 minutes or more to relax and reduce stress.
- With practice, you will be able to count slowly to ten or higher.
- Add to this breathing by imagining the scent of fragrant flowers or ocean breezes.

Stand Tall!

Correct posture is:
- Head over trunk
- Shoulders over pelvis
- Rib cage pulled back
- Weight centered directly over your feet
- Head is over trunk, not held in front of the lower body.

N. Rogers, & V. Sotardi, 12/08

References:
- Hope Publications. At Your Desk Exercises: 10 easy tension reducers. The Hope Heart Institute, Seattle, WA.
Tips to Get Flexible:

- Perform stretches in a **slow, controlled manner** without bouncing or stretching past the point of resistance.
- Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds, and repeat 2 to 4 times.
- Remember **BALANCE**!

For a system to balance, there must be equal pull on opposing muscles surrounding a joint. When there is unequal stress or repetitive movement in one direction, it is easier to develop overuse injuries from exercise or daily routine.

Think Opposite!

For stretching, think *opposite*.

For example, you have been working at your computer with head forward, shoulders and back rounded, with arms and hands forward on the keyboard. Take a moment to stretch in an opposite direction to regain balance:

- **Stop**….sit up straight and align your head over your shoulders.
- Next, think opposite, with a pectoral stretch: arms out to sides and pulled back, chest forward and back arched.
- Now stretch fingers out and back;
- Do slow and steady wrist circles;
- Finally, take 2 to 3 deep breathes through your nose, and exhale slowly through your mouth, feeling your stomach rise and fall as you relax.

**Stretch While Seated**

- **Toe touch**: Bend down between your knees as far as you can.
- **Windmill**: Bend over and touch your right hand to your left foot with left arm extended up. Repeat with opposite arm.
- **Knee hug**: Pull one leg to your chest, grasp with both hands and hold for count of 5. Repeat with opposite leg.
- **Leg extensions**: Lift one or both legs parallel to the floor. Keep back over hips. Hold for a count of 5 of less. Try rolling ankles in circles to increase circulation.
- **Midback stretch**: Raise right arm and grasp the elbow at chest level. Gently pull your right elbow toward your left shoulder. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat with left arm.
- **Side stretch**: Lift arms overhead and lock fingers together. Keeping elbows straight, press arms backward, then lean to right and left.
- **Shoulder roll**: Slowly roll shoulders forward 5 times in a circular motion, using your full range of motion. Then, roll shoulder backwards. Repeat 5 times.