Stretch and Flex Program

The Stretch and Flex Program is an on-site stretching program that all employees are encouraged to participate in. The stretches diagramed can prepare the body for everyday work stresses. This is done through stretching and strengthening the specific muscles that are commonly associated with strains, sprains and ergonomic injuries. If performed correctly and regularly, these exercises may reduce the incidences of muscle injuries.

Stretching is important in maintaining the muscle’s pliability and length. When a muscle shortens, the ability to perform a task involving that muscle decreases, which can then increase the risk of injury. This is especially noticeable in the lower back region. Tightness of the upper back, lower back, hamstrings, and calves can increase the risk of pain and injury to the spine. Maintaining the muscle’s proper length and pliability allows the body to maintain the proper biomechanical position, and decreases the possibility for injury.

Participation in the stretching programs is voluntary and could be conducted during the morning safety briefing. The stretch and flex component should not exceed 10 minutes. Employees should exercise judgment to the extent that their physical capabilities allow and they should not perform motions that may aggravate previous injuries or other physical conditions. A discussion with your medical provider is highly recommended before participating in any stretch & flex program.

Initially, your safety officer/coordinator should conduct an introduction to the program and overview of strains and sprains. Subsequently, a designated volunteer should then lead the daily stretching program, at the start of the shift, by using the examples provided. The stretching will typically last 5-10 minutes and should not exceed 10 minutes. Hold the stretch position while counting to three slowly, then relax. Repeat stretches on the opposite side. You may repeat the same stretch two or three times. All movements are gently but progressively increased. Stretches should be performed slowly and deliberately. Be as relaxed as possible. It is easier to stretch and strengthen a relaxed muscle versus a tight one. Stretch until you feel mild tension. Never take a stretch past the point of tension strain or pain.
Comfort Stretching

**Upper Body Stretches**

- **Shoulder Shrugs**
  - Stand up straight with your feet shoulder-width apart.
  - Lift your shoulders up towards your ears.
  - Pull your shoulder blades down towards your spine.
  - Repeat 5-10 times.

- **Neck Stretch**
  - Sit or stand up straight.
  - Lift yourchin up towards your nose.
  - Hold for 5 seconds.
  - Repeat on the other side.

- **Rotator Cuff Stretch**
  - Stand up straight with your right shoulder mechanics.
  - Reach your right arm across your chest.
  - Pull your shoulder blade down towards your spine and hold for 30 seconds.
  - Repeat on the other side.

- **Back Extension Stretch**
  - Lie on your stomach.
  - Place your hands behind your head.
  - Slowly raise your upper body off the ground.
  - Hold for 5 seconds.
  - Repeat 5 times.

**Mid Body Stretches**

- **Reach High**
  - Reach your left hand up towards the ceiling.
  - Hold for 5 seconds.
  - Repeat on the other side.

- **Wrist Curl Stretch**
  - Sit or stand up straight.
  - Flex your wrist up towards your elbow.
  - Hold for 5 seconds.
  - Repeat 5 times.

- **Palm Press Stretch**
  - Sit or stand up straight.
  - Press your palm up towards your shoulder.
  - Hold for 5 seconds.
  - Repeat 5 times.

- **Side Bending Stretch**
  - Sit on a chair with your back straight.
  - Twist your torso to the left and hold for 5 seconds.
  - Repeat on the other side.

- **Side Turning Stretch**
  - Sit on a chair with your back straight.
  - Turn your torso to the left, and hold for 5 seconds.
  - Repeat on the other side.

**Lower Body Stretches**

- **Cat Stretch**
  - Kneel on the floor with your knees shoulder-width apart.
  - Arch your back like a cat.
  - Hold for 5 seconds.
  - Repeat 5 times.

- **Calf**
  - Stand up with your feet shoulder-width apart.
  - Bend your right knee and place your right foot behind your left knee.
  - Hold for 5 seconds.
  - Repeat on the other side.

- **Quad**
  - Stand up with your feet shoulder-width apart.
  - Bend your right knee and place your right foot behind your left knee.
  - Hold for 5 seconds.
  - Repeat on the other side.

- **Hamstring**
  - Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you.
  - Reach down and try to touch your toes.
  - Hold for 5 seconds.
  - Repeat 5 times.

**General Tips**

- Stretch in a relaxed manner.
- Hold each stretch for 5-10 seconds.
- Repeat each stretch 5-10 times.
- Stretch all major muscle groups.
- Consult with your physician before starting any stretching routine.