

STRONG



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5 Simple Stretches You Can Do At Your Desk

Those hours of slouching in front of the computer won't take a toll on your body if you try these subtle moves to help ease stiffness and aches.

BY LARA McGLASHAN

It seems impossible that you could harm your muscles in any way just by sitting at your desk. Stapling is probably the most strenuous thing you do all day long, right? Well, that's kind of the problem. Just because you're not at risk of twisting or spraining something doesn't mean your body isn't taking a beating when you're sedentary.

"Sitting for long periods of time can shorten your hip flexors and hamstring muscles. It also puts pressure on the sciatic nerve, which runs from your glutes down the sides of your legs, causing pain and stiffness," says Kim Lyons, a former trainer for *The Biggest Loser* and owner of Bionic Body, in Hermosa Beach, California. And if

you tend to sit slouched forward—who doesn't?—you can also throw your posture out of balance, making your chest muscles tight and overstretching your lower back.

Fortunately, Lyons has the fix for all of this: five simple moves you can do at your desk whenever you're feeling stiff and sore or just need a break.



↑ **DESK WARRIOR**

STRETCHES *Entire back, sides, neck*

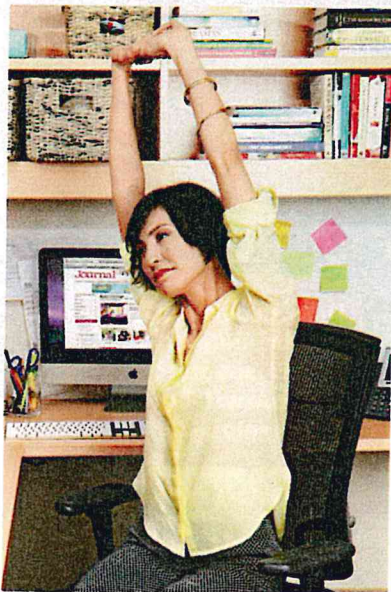
Sit on the edge of your chair with your legs together. Extend your arms out to your sides at shoulder height, palms facing down. (Press your shoulders down as you reach wide with your fingertips to feel the stretch in your neck.) Slowly rotate your torso and arms to the left, then turn your head and look forward over your outstretched hand (shown). Hold for one breath, then slowly rotate to the right and hold for one breath. Alternate sides for one minute.



↑ **HAMSTRING SLIDER**

STRETCHES *Hamstrings, lower back*

Sit back in your chair and extend your right leg so it's parallel to the floor. Place your hands on top of each other on your right knee. Round your back as you slowly slide your hands along your shin as far as you can (shown). Hold for one breath, then sit back up, switch legs and repeat. Alternate legs for one minute.



→ **SKYSCRAPER**

STRETCHES *Shoulders, sides, neck, chest*

Sit in the middle of your chair with your legs together. Clasp your hands and interlace your fingers, then turn your palms around so they face outward. Reach your arms straight overhead and look up. Slowly bend to the right and hold for two breaths (shown), feeling the stretch along your right side. Slowly bend to the left and hold for two breaths. Continue alternating sides for one minute.



↑ **NECK OPENER**

STRETCHES *Shoulder, neck*

Sit in the middle of your chair. Reach your right hand behind your back and hold your wrist with your left hand and pull it to the left side (A). Tilt your head away from your right shoulder, then look up, look forward and look down (B), taking a full breath in each position. Repeat sequence for 30 seconds, then switch sides.



↑ **HIP HUGGER**

STRETCHES *Glutes, hips, lower back*

Sit with your feet flat on the floor. Cross your right ankle over your left knee and hold your ankle steady with your left hand. Keeping your back flat, slowly bend forward as far as you can (shown). Hold for 30 seconds, then repeat on the opposite side.