

Ergonomic Basics: Microbreaks

Posted in: Breaks and Stretches

Microbreaks are an important component of workplace health. Muscles become stressed if asked to perform repetitive tasks or hold static positions for too long during the work day. Microbreaks allow a change of position, different muscle use, stimulate blood flow and can help reduce the risk of injury or discomfort. Microbreaks can last a few minutes or just a few seconds, but your body will thank you for them!

Try some of the following microbreaks to reduce build up of stress to your joints and muscles during the work day.

At The Computer

- ✓ Regular 'palms down' typing and mousing posture is a non-neutral position. It requires wrist and forearm work to maintain, and can result in fatigue over long periods.
- ✓ Neutral posture for the wrist and forearm is 'palms sideways' resting on the 5th finger side of your hand as shown at right.
- ✓ Unwind into this low risk posture whenever you're composing your thoughts, reading, or anytime you're not mouse clicking or typing.

Back Basics

- ✓ Try the 'why me' stretch to counteract forward hunching over the computer.
- ✓ Stretching backwards for a few seconds every 10 or 15 mins will give your back a break.
- ✓ Close your eyes for an extra relaxation boost!

Alternating Tasks

- ✓ To further reduce repetitive muscle work during the day, alternate your work tasks so that you do at least 5 minutes of work using different muscles each hour.
- ✓ If you're busy on the computer, stop every hour and do 5 minutes of filing or check voice mails so your 'computer muscles' get a break.
- ✓ If all your work is computer-based then alternate applications so you do an hour of spreadsheet work alternated with 5 minutes of replying to email, etc.



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This article was
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Natural Microbreaks

- ✓ Natural microbreaks happen in the day without you planning them, but you can encourage them as well...
 - ✓ Try printing to a printer outside your office so you have to get up or take a short walk to get documents.
 - ✓ Drink water during the day, it's healthy and you'll need to get up from your desk to refill and take bathroom breaks.
 - ✓ Try walking to a co-worker's desk to get information rather than calling or emailing.
 - ✓ Leave your office and take a short walk at lunch time.
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