

Benefits of Stretching In The Work Place

All of us need exercise. Just as athletes need to warm up before competition, so do industrial and office workers. In some ways our work is becoming more physically demanding than ever. Because many of our jobs are specialized, we are sometimes required to spend considerable time in awkward postures. We must take a few seconds occasionally to move and stretch our muscles and joints. This will promote circulation and reduce fatigue and the potential for injury.

Expecting a worker to perform at a particular pace or stay in one position for extended periods often goes against the natural physiology of the human body. Allowing and encouraging brief but effective breaks in the day allow the employee to "recover" throughout the day and remain more productive. Therefore, stretching is not downtime or non-productive time but recovery time. For a company to be hesitant to provide a brief time for an employee to stretch periodically can be compared to a company being reluctant to perform preventive maintenance on a valuable machine.

An effective warm-up/stretching program serves two purposes, as follows:

1. It prepares the body for work. It is important to heat up the muscles prior to an activity in order to effectively utilize existing flexibility just as athletes do. This type of program can serve to also prepare an employee mentally. While stiffness and/or fatigue may be part of the problem, a lack of alertness or focus on the job may also be a contributing factor.
2. Stretching allows compensation for physical demands of work. Cats stretch frequently during the day, not to increase their flexibility, but to maintain it. They stretch to compensate for positions they have assumed for extended periods.

Change is often threatening and the development of a stretching and warm-up program requires not only physical changes but behavioral changes as well. The benefits are well worth the time and energy spent to implementing the change. An exercise program will give you better circulation, better strength and stamina. People who exercise regularly have more energy and vigor. Statistics show that people who exercise are not sick as often and frequently recover faster.

Here are some guidelines for exercise at the worksite:

1. Start out easy. If you have not been doing exercises, go easy at first.
2. Gradually increase. After a few weeks you should be able to do more exercises and more vigorous with stretches.
3. Do them daily. If unable to do an entire program, at least do a few of them during the work day.
4. Exercise should not be painful, but should definitely feel like you are stretching and working all the muscles and joints.

HealthFirst Medical can help you design a warm up stretching program for your workers. Contact our Marketing Department at 562-926-3440.

Source: (www.med.navy.mil)

Preventing the Spread of Bloodborne Pathogens

Bloodborne pathogens, such as bacteria and viruses, are present in blood and body fluids and can cause disease in humans. The bloodborne pathogens of primary concern are hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. These and other bloodborne pathogens are spread primarily through:

- **Direct Contact.** Infected blood or body fluid from one person enters another person's body at a connect entry site, such as infected blood splashing in the eye.
- **Indirect Contact.** A person's skin touches an object that contains the blood or body fluid of an infected person, such as picking up soiled dressings contaminated with an infected person's blood or body fluid.
- **Respiratory Droplet Transmission.** A person inhales droplets from an infected person, such as through a cough or sneeze.
- **Vector-Borne Transmission.** A person's skin is penetrated by an infectious source, such as an insect bite.

Follow standard precautions to help prevent the spread of bloodborne pathogens and other diseases whenever there is a risk of exposure to blood or other body fluids. These precautions require that all blood and other body fluids be treated as if they are infectious. Standard precautions include maintaining personal hygiene and using personal protective equipment (PPE), engineering controls, work practice controls, and proper equipment cleaning and spill cleanup procedures.

TO PREVENT INFECTION, FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES:

- Avoid contact with blood and other body fluids.
- Use CPR breathing barriers, such as resuscitation masks, when giving rescue breathing.
- Wear disposable gloves whenever providing care, particularly if you may come into contact with blood or body fluids. Also wear protective coverings, such as a mask, eyewear and a gown, if blood or other body fluids can splash.
- Cover any cuts, scrapes or sores and remove jewelry, including rings, before wearing disposable gloves.
- Change gloves before providing care to a different victim.
- Remove disposable gloves without contacting the soiled part of the gloves and dispose of them in a proper container.
- Thoroughly wash your hands and other areas immediately after providing care.

IF YOU ARE EXPOSED, TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS IMMEDIATELY:

- Wash needlestick injuries, cuts and exposed skin thoroughly with soap and water.
- If splashed with blood or potentially infectious material around the mouth or nose, flush the area with water.
- If splashed in or around the eyes, irrigate with clean water, saline or sterile irrigants for 20 minutes.
- Report the incident to the appropriate person identified in your employer's exposure control plan immediately. Additionally report the incident to emergency medical services (EMS) personnel who take over care.
- Record the incident by writing down what happened. Include the date, time and circumstances of the exposure; any actions taken after the exposure; and any other information required by your employer.
- Seek immediate follow-up care as identified in your employer's exposure control plan.
- OSHA requires that a hepatitis B vaccination series be made available to first responders.

(Source: American Red Cross)