

Mental Health Awareness Week 2024

Tips and information for good physical and mental health

At Your Desk

Below are a few suggestions of things you can do at your desk or at work on a regular basis, many of which help alleviate stress and tension in your shoulders and neck after sitting at your desk for too long without a break.

They are not all group activities, like yoga, Pilates, many are things you can do quietly at your desk on your own whenever you feel the need:

Desk Stretches:

- Neck Rolls: Slowly roll your neck in a circular motion, first clockwise, then counterclockwise.
- Shoulder Shrugs: Lift your shoulders towards your ears, hold for a few seconds, then release.
- Wrist Circles: Rotate your wrists in circles, first clockwise, then counterclockwise.
- Seated Spinal Twist: Sit up straight, twist your torso to one side while holding onto the back of your chair, then repeat on the other side.

Deep Breathing Exercises:

- Take a few moments to focus on your breath. Inhale deeply through your nose, hold for a few seconds, then exhale slowly through your mouth.
- Box Breathing: Inhale for a count of four, hold for a count of four, exhale for a count of four, and hold for another count of four before repeating.

Micro-break Activities:

- Eye Exercises: Take a break from staring at your screen by focusing on an object in the distance for a few moments.

Jaw clenching:

- The jaw relaxation position is to lightly place your tongue behind the top of your teeth and let your jaw sit in its natural position. You should feel a sense of lightness in your jaw, and it should feel longer. You can practice this position whilst driving, working at a computer, or watching TV.
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- Try sitting on a stability ball rather than a chair

- Allow your employees to have an extended lunch break should they wish, to attend a class, go to the gym, a run or other forms of exercise during the day.
- Walk and talk meetings.
- Walk & talk when you're on the phone or stand and talk when on the phone.

Tips to Encourage Movement:

- Set reminders for short breaks throughout the day to stand up, stretch, or take a quick walk around the office.
- Take the stairs instead of the lift, or parking farther away from the office to incorporate more movement into your daily routine.
- Set Work Hours: Define your work hours and stick to them, resist the urge to check emails after hours
- Allocate Break Times: Take regular breaks to recharge throughout the day and schedule in time for activities that help with stress release, it's OK to give yourself time for breaks.
- Prioritise Self-Care: Make self-care a non-negotiable part of your daily routine, whether it's exercise, meditation and prioritise activities that replenish your energy.

Mindfulness Techniques:

- Body Scan: Close your eyes and slowly bring your awareness to each part of your body, noticing any tension and consciously relaxing those areas.
- Grounding Exercise: Focus on your senses by taking a moment to notice five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.

Resources

For some of us, it can be hard to be active, perhaps because we have a mental or physical disability or health condition. Things to consider before starting any exercise:

Anxiety UK have some self-care tools and videos: <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/self-care-tools/>

The NHS website has [different examples of activities you could try](#) as well as [free online exercise videos](#). Start small and build up slowly if you don't do much physical activity.

The NHS links on exercise: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/>

The Governments Physical Activity guidelines
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/physical-activity-guidelines>

Advice for those with a disability, health or mental health condition

The NHS also has advice about [getting active if you have a disability or health condition](#), with tips on building activity into your day and finding accessible activities and classes. Exercising with a disability can be frustrating, but it's important to work with your body.

The Mental Health Foundation has tips and information on things to consider if you have a mental health condition as there may be factors that affect the amount or type of physical activity you can do.
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/physical-activity-and-mental-health>