

WorkSmart Stretching Plan

Perform the WorkSmart dynamic stretches 1 to 3 times daily; or choose 1-3 stretches to do every hour to reduce stiffness and pain.



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WorkSmart Industrial Athlete Stretching Poster:

UnityPoint Health – St. Luke’s Industrial Athlete Program

Your body is a unique, one of a kind masterpiece, and was created to move! Moving your body frequently, and adding the proper dynamic stretch with a 3 to 5 second hold, are very important for the reversal of our daily awkward, repetitive, and prolonged postures used throughout the day at work, home, and at play. Overtime, if these awkward postures and repetitive motions are not reversed and dealt with proactively, this may lead to excessive discomfort, stiffness and pain, increased stress and muscle tension, or even a musculoskeletal injury (MSD). **These WorkSmart dynamic stretches should be performed 1 to 3 times daily;** 1) Before work or Start of workday 2) After lunch or mid-shift break 3) End of workday or After work and/ or 4) Before bed to improve your daily rest and recovery. **Dynamic stretches should not be forced, and not cause moderate to severe pain.** However, some discomfort to minimal pain may be expected. **Warning: DO NOT BOUNCE at the end of any dynamic stretch, as this may increase injury risks!** You may notice some increased muscle soreness for first couple days up to 1-2 weeks after beginning this dynamic stretching program. To help reduce this soreness; drink 40+ ounces of water daily working towards half body weight in ounces, do any aerobic exercise such as walking or biking, and stretch again to get rid of your body’s lactic acids which when built up may lead to feeling stiff and sore.

1a. Reach for the Sky Stand up tall and reach with both arms up to the sky (with one hand gripped around your opposite wrist) look straight up towards your hands. When your arms are fully extended hold for 3 to 5 seconds, then gently side bend your trunk to the L side (photo 1b) and hold for 3 to 5 seconds, then to the R side and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat ___ 2 ___ times. **Great stretch to reduce stiffness, pain, and muscle tension from stress to upper back, neck, and shoulders.**

2a. Cat Back Stretch Stand and reach with both arms straight out in front of you at shoulder level (gently hold both hands together), arch your back forward and hold this position for 3 to 5 seconds. Now add rotation (photo 2b) towards your L side and hold for 3 to 5 seconds, then repeat on the R side. Repeat ___1___ times. **Great stretch to reduce stiffness, pain, and trigger points between your shoulder blades, upper back, and neck.**

3. Standing Trunk Extension (Backward Bend) Standing up tall put your hands on your hips/ lower back and while looking straight ahead, gently bend backwards and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat ___ 2 to 3 ___ times. **One of the most important stretches to reduce stiffness, pain, and injury risks to your lower back. This keeps the discs in your lower back healthy, and reverses the sitting and forward bending posture stresses we do frequently each day. Do frequently throughout the workday, at least every hour if you sit for most of your workday.** A great tweak to this stretch is to look back and over your shoulder holding for 3 to 5 seconds, and do this towards the side of pain in your lower back/ hips/ buttock muscles.

4. Standing Trunk Sidebend Stand up tall and bend towards your L side reaching with your R hand overhead and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat other side, bending towards your R side with your L arm overhead and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat ___1 to 2___ times. If you feel any pain in your lower back and/ or shoulder bring your arms down and place them on your hips. **This is an excellent stretch to reduce stiffness and pain to your lower back, shoulders, and neck.**

5. Standing Trunk Rotation Stand up tall and reach with your R hand over your L shoulder, twisting your body towards the L side. Hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Now reach with L hand over R shoulder twisting your body to the R and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat ___ 2 to 3 ___ times. **Reduce stiffness, pain, and injury risks to lower back, shoulders, knees, and hips.**

6. Chin Tuck Stand up tall as in military attention, keeping your chin tucked down (looking straight ahead) and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat ___ 2 to 3 ___ times. You can do this either with or without your hand as a guide. Don’t push on your jaw as this can stress your TMJ joint. **Best stretch to reverse headaches, and reverse our most common awkward posture habit of forward head posture, “looking down” to reduce stiffness and pain.** You can tweak this stretch by adding extension and/ or looking over your shoulder towards the side of pain. Just bump into the pain and slowly back off...repeat until your headaches are gone!

7. Neck Stretch (3 Positions A, B, and C) Place your L hand on top of your R shoulder, and reach R arm behind your back. Gently pull down R shoulder with L hand and tip your head towards your L shoulder while looking straight ahead **Photo A**, hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat other side. **Photo B**- With L hand holding R shoulder down gently look down and over towards your L shoulder and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat other side. **Photo C**- With L hand holding R shoulder down tip your head towards your L shoulder and then gently look back over your R shoulder and/ or twist your head to the R side holding for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat other side. Repeat ___1___ times. **Great stretch to do in the shower with warm water to reduce neck and shoulder stiffness, pain, and muscle tension from stress. This stretch performed 1-3 times daily may also treat, and reverse elbow, wrist, and thumb tendonitis, or carpal tunnel syndrome too by decompressing the blood vessels and nerves between the neck and shoulders (thoracic outlet)!**

8a. Wrist Stretch Hold R arm out in front of you at shoulder level (fully extended) with palm up. With your L hand gently pull your R fingers back (all fingers, except the thumb) to feel a good stretch to your R forearm (**See photo a**). Hold for 3 to 5 seconds, then pull your fingers across the front of your body (**photo b**) and hold for 3 to 5 seconds, lastly rotate your hand to the outside and hold for 3 to 5 seconds (**no photo**). Repeat other side. Repeat ___1 to 2___ times. **Reduce stiffness, and pain of the wrist, forearm, and hands. Treat or prevent wrist tendonitis, and carpal tunnel. Repeat this stretch frequently (2-3+ times daily up to every hour), especially for your dominant hand.**

9a. Elbow Stretch Hold both arms out in front of you at shoulder level with palms down facing the floor. Next make a fist with both hands and tip both of your fists down towards the floor as in photo a and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. **Great stretch to reduce stiffness and pain to back of forearm or elbow, and will treat or prevent tennis elbow/ lateral epicondylitis.** Now turn your fists in towards each other and hold for 3 to 5 seconds (no photo). Lastly do the same turning your fists to the outside/ away from each other (no photo) and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. **Photo b shows the elbow stretch with an overpressure.** Hold your R arm out in front of you with palm down and fingers extended (out straight). With your L hand gently pull your fingers back until you feel a forearm stretch and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Add rotation to the inside and outside, holding for 3 to 5 seconds at each position. Repeat ___1 to 2___ times.

10. Shoulder Stretch (Posterior capsule) Reach your R arm directly across the front of your body at shoulder level and with your L arm gently give an overpressure to your R arm (just above your R elbow). Hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat other side. Repeat ___1___ times. You can tweak this exercise by changing the angle of your shoulder across your body, either above or below shoulder level at an angle. **Great stretch to reduce stiffness, pain, and injury risks to shoulders, neck, and upper back.**

11. Doorway Chest Stretch Stand in a doorway with your feet staggered (one in front of the other) and your arms as shown in the photo with palms facing away of you and looking straight ahead (as making a field goal post). Hold this position for 3 to 5 seconds. Tweak this stretch by turning your head to the R side and hold for 3 to 5 seconds and repeat by turning your head to the L side and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat for ___ 2 to 3 ___ times and then switch your feet staggered position and repeat other side for 2 to 3 reps. If this posture of your shoulders and arms hurts/ bothers your shoulders just hold your arms down away from your sides with elbows straight and palms facing the door. **Excellent stretch to reduce stiffness and pain to shoulders, neck, and lower back.**

12. Hip Flexor Stretch Stand in a staggered stance with R foot forward and L foot back, with feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart. You may put front foot on a chair (per photo) or on stairs to increase this stretch. Lunge forward and lean back with hands on hips and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Next lean back ward again and reach with your L hand overhead holding 3 to 5 seconds, repeat ___ 2 ___ times. Now side bend to the R and reach with your L hand and holding 3 to 5 seconds, repeat ___ 2 ___ times. Finally rotate to your R side reaching with your L hand and hold for 3 to 5 seconds, repeat ___ 2 ___ times. Now repeat 2 reps of each motion

on the other side with R foot backwards and reaching with your R hand. **Important stretch to reduce stiffness, pain, and injury risks to lower back, hips, knees, and shoulders. Very important to perform 1-2 times daily for those who sit 4+ hours per day.**

13. Quadricep Stretch Stand up tall and pull your R foot back towards your buttocks (gluteus maximus) and hold your R foot with your R hand for 3 to 5 seconds, repeat this for ___ 1 to 2 ___ repetitions. Try to maintain your knee position pointed straight down towards the floor which increases the stretch to your quadriceps and also hip flexor muscle. Repeat other side. **This stretch reduces stiffness, pain, and injury risks to knees, hips, and lower back.**

14. Hip Adductor/ Groin Stretch Start with your feet wider than shoulder width apart and toes in a slight toe-out posture. Slowly bend forward reaching down towards the floor (between your feet) with both hands while breathing out and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Now slowly reach both hands towards your R foot and hold for 3 to 5 seconds and lastly repeat this stretch reaching towards your L foot for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat this stretch for ___ 1 ___ repetitions. You can further tweak this great hip stretch by; Staggering your feet, and toeing your feet in or out. **This stretch reduces stiffness, pain, and injury risks to your lower back, knees, hips, and shoulders, and should be performed 1-2 times daily.**

15. Hamstring Stretch Stand up and extend your R leg in front of you onto a chair against the wall for stability (or you can use the stairs), gently pull the toes of your R foot back towards your head as in **photo a** and reach both of your arms in front of you towards your feet (to help your balance and safety, you may want to do this stretch by a table/ wall/ or steady object). Hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Then roll your R foot/ leg to the inside and hold for 3 to 5 seconds, then roll your leg to the outside holding for 3 to 5 seconds. It is common to be very stiff and uncomfortable rotating leg to inside. Another way to tweak this stretch is by reaching with both of your arms to the inside and outside of your R leg, while continuing to slowly rotate your leg reaching opposite of your foot rotation. **One of the most important stretches to perform 1-2 times daily for those with knee stiffness or pain, and for those who pull legs back underneath their chair when sitting (awkward sitting posture habit). Also reduces stiffness, pain, and MSD injury risks to lower back, hips, and shoulders.** Repeat other side. Repeat ___ 2 to 3 ___ times.

16. Sitting Piriformis Stretch Sit up tall and cross your R leg over your L knee. Turn your body to the R and gently pull your R knee up towards your L shoulder and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat ___ 1 to 2 ___ times, and repeat other side. **Important stretch to reverse or treat sciatica pain, and lower back, hips, knees, and shoulders stiffness, pain, and injuries too! This stretch is very important to perform 1-2 times daily for those with awkward sitting postures of; crossing their legs, sitting on their feet, toe out > 45 degrees when standing, and for men who sit with hips spread apart (awkward postures).**

17. Seated Twist Sitting up tall reach your R hand and put this on the outside of your L knee and gently twist towards your L side. Hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat other side. Repeat ___ 2 ___ times. You can also tweak this stretch by reaching with your arm instead of holding your knee. **Excellent stretch to reduce stiffness and pain to lower back, hips, knees, and shoulders.**

18. Calf Stretch Stand facing a wall in a staggered stance L foot forward. R foot back (toes facing the wall). Have both hands reaching forward at shoulder height and lunge forward until you feel a stretch R calf. Hold 3 to 5 seconds. Shift hips to R side and hold 3 to 5 seconds. Shift hips to L side and hold for 3 to 5 seconds and repeat ___ 2 ___ times each side. Lunge forward until you feel a stretch R calf, hold 3 to 5 seconds. Then look back over R shoulder and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Next look back over L shoulder and hold for 3 to 5 seconds, repeat ___ 2 ___ times for each side. **Great stretch to reduce stiffness, pain, and MSD injuries to your foot (arch, and heel), ankles, knees, hips, and lower back.** Repeat the same on other side with L foot backwards.

These are the UnityPoint Health – St. Luke’s Industrial Athlete WorkSmart Stretches that will improve your working body vitality and quality of life as you age. Performing these stretches 1 to 3 times daily, or choosing 1 to 3 stretches to perform every hour will reduce stiffness and pain, improve your energy level, reduce stress and muscle tension, reduce MSD injury risks, and improve your quality of life! WorkSmart dynamic stretches #1 to #10 take 3 to 5 minutes to complete, and stretches #11 to #18 are very important stretches to perform 1 to 2 times daily for your lower back, shoulders, knees, hips, and ankles, and feet.

Disclaimer:

This program is intended to provide instruction on the UnityPoint Health – St. Luke’s WorkSmart Dynamic Stretching Program to improve your daily energy level, reduce stiffness and pain, reduce stress and muscle tension, reduce MSD injury risks, and improve your quality of life at work, home, and at play. These types of dynamic stretches may not be appropriate for all individuals, dependent on your medical history and current functional health status and well-being.

Before beginning this or any other type of exercise program, it is advised to consult with your primary care physician and/ or physical therapist to determine what dynamic stretches are right for you. If at any time while performing these dynamic stretches you experience moderate or severe pain, numbness, and/ or tingling, and/ or dysfunction, it is advised to discontinue performing these dynamic stretches and contact your primary care physician or physical therapist for follow up care.

The creator, UnityPoint Health – St. Luke’s, and any of the UnityPoint Health affiliates disclaim any liabilities or loss, personal or otherwise, in connection with these WorkSmart dynamic stretches and advice herein.

Sources:

1. WorkSmart - The Industrial Athlete Manual by Lauren Hebert DPT, OCS 96’ from IMPACC USA. www.impacttraining.com.
2. The Work Injury Consulting Practice “Chapter 7 - Stretching programs for the workplace” by Lauren Hebert DPT, OCS 1998.
3. Attending four Gray Institute “Chain Reaction” courses from 99’ to 07’ led by Gary Gray PT, FAFS and FVDS “Functional Flexibility - Enhancing Life 2.11” 8/20/04 www.grayinstitute.com

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