

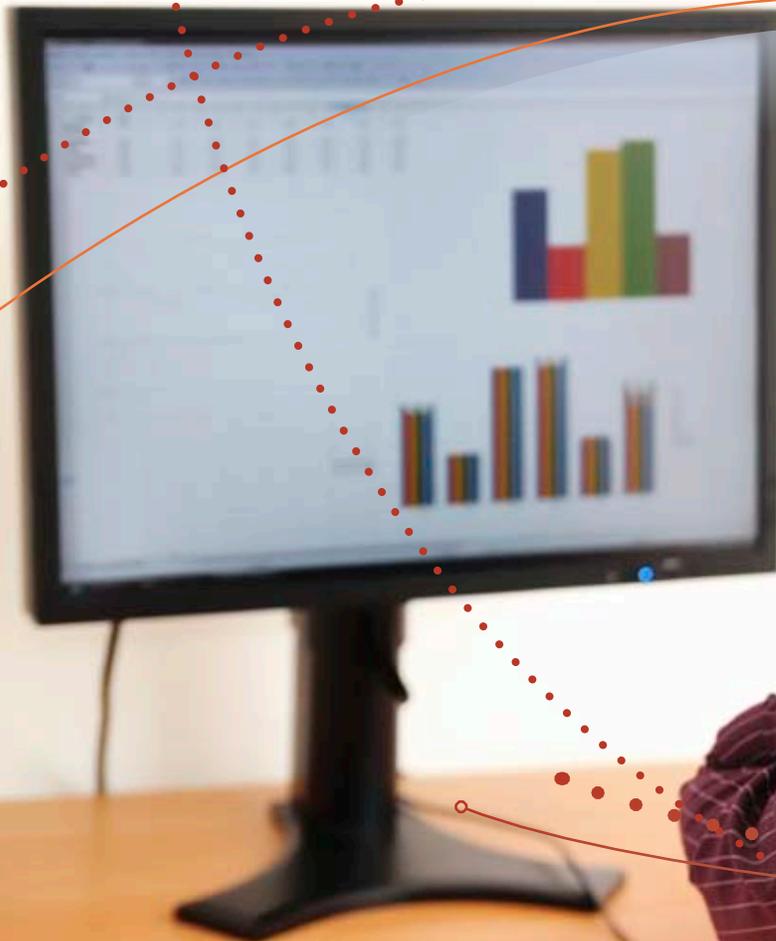


benefits of  
**WorkSmart**  
stretching  
for the workplace?





Does your job require you to sit at a desk or work at a computer workstation for most of your workday? Do you have headaches, upper back or shoulder pain? Are you required to lift, push or pull, and carry either heavy, awkward, or frequently throughout your workday? Have you ever had lower back pain or an elbow, wrist, or thumb injury? Then you may want to look into starting a WorkSmart Stretching program at your company and for yourself, too.





**In** this article we'll discuss the many benefits of performing WorkSmart Stretching at your company such as; Reducing the risks for MSDs (Musculoskeletal Disorders) like sprain and strains of the lower back, shoulders, and knees and CTDs (Cumulative trauma disorders) such as rotator cuff and/ or biceps tendonitis, tennis elbow, dequervain's tenosynovitis ("blackberry thumb"), wrist tendonitis and carpal tunnel syndrome injuries and their related costs. Reducing workplace stress, increasing your energy level, and improving worker productivity are other benefits you should expect from performing WorkSmart Stretching two to three times per workday.

Since 2001, St. Luke's Health System has had a 54% reduction in MSD claims (51% reduction MSDs and a 75% reduction in CTDs), a 100% reduction in lost time injuries (not including fractures), and a 78% reduction in claims with restricted duty and a 64% reduction of days employees were on restriction. St. Luke's WorkSmart stretching program has been a part in achieving these outstanding outcomes in MSD/ CTD work injury prevention. Other IMPACC WorkSmart and Wellness services performed at St. Luke's have included an Ergonomic Work Risk Analysis of every department and clinic across St. Luke's Health System, WorkSmart Management and Employee Training, WorkSmart department meetings, Training and use of Safe Patient Handling Equipment, WorkSmart Preventive Coaching, and the St. Luke's Health Challenge since 2006.

How many of you have dogs and/or cats at home? If you do, have you ever noticed how often they take the time to stretch before walking, running, jumping to chase a bug, playing, going to get something to eat, or simply before they return to another naptime posture? Have you noticed how long they hold their stretches? Typically only about 3 to 5 seconds and this prepares their body to perform the next action of their body without injury or pain. That is one of the keys to the extremely successful IMPACC WorkSmart Industrial Athlete Stretching program at St. Luke's Health System in Sioux City, IA. Frequent stretching of the neck, shoulders, mid and lowerback, hips, elbows/ forearms, and wrists along with body movements to reverse the daily awkward posture stresses is important to Working Smart. This frequent three to five second hold WorkSmart stretching keeps a proper blood and nutrient supply to your working muscles and tissues throughout the workday to prevent fatigue, discomfort, and reduce your risks for MSD injuries, while reducing stress and increasing your energy level.

“American culture has often overlooked the importance of stretching daily to improve our health and vitality to reduce the daily wear and tear to our working aging bodies.”

American culture has often overlooked the importance of stretching daily to improve our health and vitality to reduce the daily wear and tear to our working aging bodies. However, in the last 3 to 5 years more and more companies in the Siouxland area (Siouxland is the Tri-State areas of Sioux City, IA, NE, SD and the surrounding communities) and across the United States are implementing WorkSmart Stretching Programs (or others like it) into their daily work practices and seeing many excellent work injury reduction benefits such as, reduced MSD OSHA recordable injuries and their related costs, improvement in worker morale, reduction in disability costs, and improved customer service. A source from Ball State University noted that workplace stretching programs increased flexibility and strength of workers and decreased the risks of back injuries by six times.



One of the best benefits of performing worksmart stretching is that you stimulate the formation of joint synovial fluid in your joints. This acts to make your joints easier to move, thereby reducing any stiffness or pain that you may have in your joints. Over time this habit of performing WorkSmart stretching daily will significantly reduce your risks of developing osteoarthritis (stiffness and pain in your joints) as you age. If you already have osteoarthritis, you will reduce the stiffness and/ or pain in your joints and improve your quality of life at work, home and play. Osteoarthritis is the number one cause of disability worldwide, so this is a HUGE reason to work on making this a lifestyle habit in your life. Dr Oz and Roizen report from their book, “You, Staying Young”, that if you perform a good lifestyle habit for three years, the effect on your body (at a cellular level) is as if you’ve done it your entire life. Even better, within 3 months (or 90 days) of changing a behavior, you can start to measure a difference in your life expectancy.

Think about the awesome and wonderful flexibility of your children and grandchildren? Their bodies are like “Gumby”; soft, flexible, able to absorb the shock and not break (fracture) by doing such things as; crashing their bikes, falling down stairs or out of a tree (Ouch!!). This flexibility or “Gumby like body” significantly reduces their chances of having sprains and strains (ligament and muscle) injuries and fractures (broken bones). They haven’t yet put their bodies through years of poor posture, low levels of physical activity, being 25 or more pounds overweight, and sitting for 6 to 8 hours per workday for 20+ years to cause multiple chronic dysfunctions of lower back pain, headaches and/ or shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand tendonitis. Are you ready to leave these behind and improve your quality of life? Get ready “GUMBY” here we come!!

Did you know that after the age of 30 your body loses strength and flexibility every year? But, it doesn’t have to be that way. You have the power of positive daily lifestyle choices to choose daily WorkSmart Stretching, and Strength or Resistance Training 2-3 times per week or more for life. The American workforce’s average age is between 45 and 50 years of age and surgery numbers for the lower back, total joint replacement for the knees and hips and shoulder surgery are at an all time high. Research has shown us that it is never too late to improve your strength and flexibility, and prevent your need for Total joint replacement or other surgery’s.

A daily question you must ask yourself is this; Is promoting and performing WorkSmart Stretching daily beneficial to my company’s bottom line and the health and wellness of my company’s employee’s? To formulate a plan and start a WorkSmart Stretching Program specific to the type of work your company performs and to prevent the types of OSHA recordable MSD/ CTDs you are seeing, please contact Erik Nieuwenhuis MS, PT who is a physical therapist specializing in work injury prevention ergonomics and wellness from St. Luke’s Regional Medical Center in Sioux City, IA at 712-279-1842, or e-mail him at [Nieuween@stlukes.org](mailto:Nieuween@stlukes.org).



**ABOUT Erik Nieuwenhuis MS, PT**

Erik Nieuwenhuis graduated with his Master of Science in Physical Therapy degree in May of 1998 from Des Moines University in Des Moines, IA. He is a Physical Therapist who specializes in work injury prevention ergonomics and has been a Wellness consultant to industry since 2000. He has been employed at St. Luke’s Regional Medical Center since August of 1998. As a Physical Therapist, Erik has treated primarily the outpatient orthopedic patient population, and has some inpatient acute care experience over his 11 years at St. Luke’s. He was trained in the Injury Management Prevention and Cost Containment program “The Work Injury Practice” in March 2000, by Lauren Hebert DPT, OCS. In June 2009, he completed the Well Workplace University Level 1 certification requirements from WELCOA. He was honored with the Roxanne Joens-Matre 2009 Ambassador of the Year Award from Live Healthy Iowa this past year. He is a passionate leader in promoting healthy lifestyle choices and working smart at work, home and play.



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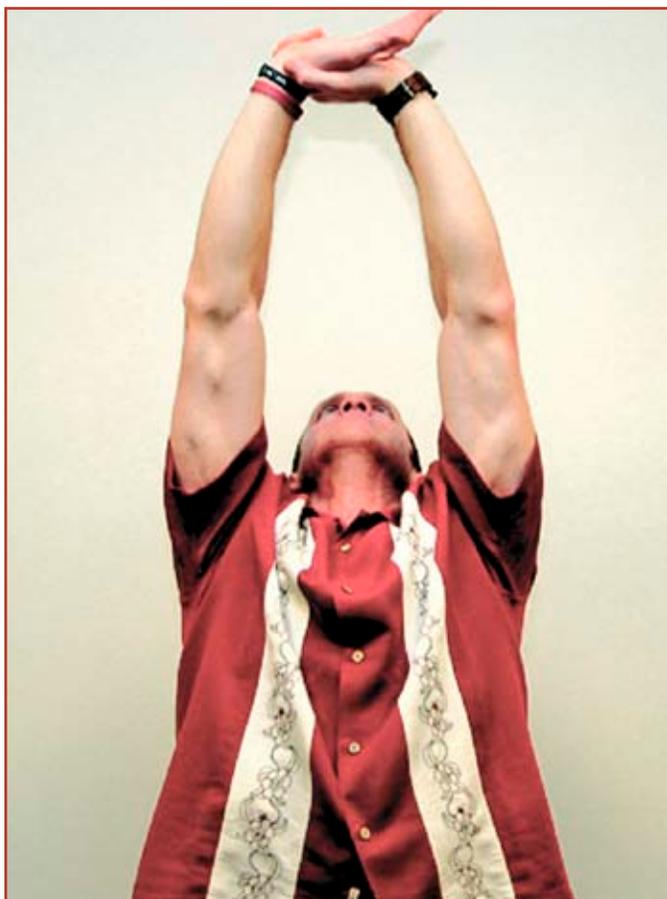
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## THE TOP TEN REASONS TO PERFORM WORKSMART STRETCHING DAILY

- 10** Increased ability to perform everyday tasks at Work, Home and Play.
- 9** Decreased risk of MSD/ CTD injury's.
- 8** Increased quality and quantity of joint synovial fluid (less joint wear and tear), and reduced osteoarthritis joint stiffness and pain!
- 7** Improve your body's neuro-muscular coordination, that will improve your body's reaction time, balance, and reduce your risks of falling and/ or having an MSD injury or fracture if you should fall.
- 6** Reduced muscle fatigue and soreness which occurs because your body flushes out the lactic and uric acids which are the by product of your muscles, ligaments and tendons doing work to move your body.
- 5** Improved muscle balance and posture which will reduce your risks of MSD and CTD injuries.
- 4** Decreased risk of joint stiffness and/ or pain to the lower back, neck, shoulders, knees, hips, elbows, wrists and hands.
- 3** Increased blood supply and nutrients to your muscles, tendons and joints which gives your body and mind more ENERGY!
- 2** Reduced STRESS...Yeah...What an awesome reason to stretch daily!
- 1** Enhanced enjoyment and quality of your everyday life with your family, friends, co-workers, and hobbies you enjoy!



This is an example of 1 of the 18 WorkSmart Stretches from the St. Luke's Regional Medical Center WorkSmart Stretching Plan. This is an excellent stretch to reduce workers upper back, neck and shoulders fatigue and stress level throughout the workday.

# **SPECIAL** **REPORT**

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