The following program has been designed to help you implement a warm-up, stretch and flexibility program in your workplace.

The program has been split into three parts:
1. Before Work Warm-Up
2. During Work Stress Releasers
3. At Home Flexibility Stretches

The program is designed to meet the needs of the workplaces that are concerned about MSDs (musculoskeletal disorders). All three parts of the program should be implemented together to provide the most benefit. This program is one component of an MSD prevention program. A comprehensive program should include:

- Management support and participation
- Awareness and information about musculoskeletal disorders
- Ergonomics training and assessments
- Physical and engineering interventions
**INTRODUCING THE PROGRAM**

Introduce the program by explaining that:

- MSDs are an injury or disorder of the musculoskeletal system
- MSDs happen when the musculoskeletal system can’t handle the load being put on it
- MSD symptoms may include pain with or without movement, swelling, tenderness, reduced range of motion, tingling, or numbness
- Some examples of MSDs are back pain, sore or stiff muscles, carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis
- The primary risk factors for MSDs are force, sustained or awkward postures, and repetition
- Some things you can do to reduce your risk are:
  - reduce the weight of what you are lifting
  - don’t carry heavy objects over long distances
  - minimize reaching
  - don’t twist while lifting
  - take breaks and stretch out your muscles when doing repetitive tasks
- MSDs are an issue in all workplaces
- There are more MSDs than any other injuries reported each year

**BEFORE WORK WARM-UP**

**Colour poster – 8.5” X 11” or 11” X 17”**

When introducing the warm-up program, you can print the 8.5” X 11” poster in black and white and distribute it as a handout.

The larger format can be colour printed and placed in various locations throughout your workplace. You will want to post the Before Work Warm-Up poster in areas where workers will be starting their day and will see the poster at the beginning of their shift.

Introduce the Before Work Warm-Up component of the program by explaining that:

- Asking cold muscles to do physical work can lead to injury
- Warming-up will ensure that your muscles are ready to begin working
- Taking a few minutes to warm-up also helps workers to prepare mentally for the work ahead

Ask your supervisors to promote the program by leading by example. Remind them to do their own warm-up and suggest that they ask others to join in.

Make sure you stress these key points when introducing the Before Work Warm-Up component of the program.

**Key Points:**

- Consult your doctor before engaging in any new physical activities, especially if you have any health related issues
- Stop if you feel uncomfortable, dizzy, or experience any pain
- Warming-up is an important part of preparing your muscles for physical labour
- Read all of the instructions before beginning
- Make sure you have enough room to safely do each movement
- Repeat each exercise 5-8 times (on each side, if applicable)
- Never over-extend; keep the movements small and controlled
- Go at your own pace

**DURING WORK STRESS RELEASES**

**Colour poster – 8.5” X 11” or 11” X 17”**

The During Work Stress Releasers poster should be posted around the workplace in areas that are visible to workers while they are performing their duties.
Workers should be encouraged to take a few minutes every hour, or after completing a strenuous task, to relieve their muscle stress or tension. Explain that there are many benefits to doing these stretches which include:

- Protecting muscles, joints, and tendons from injury
- Enhanced physical fitness
- Increased body awareness
- Mental and physical relaxation
- Decreased muscle tightness
- Increased range of motion

Make sure you stress the following key points.

**Key Points:**

- Hold each stretch for a minimum of 15 seconds
- You will feel a slight pull in your muscle, but never any pain
- Stop if you feel any pain
- Do not overstretch
- Make sure you have enough room to safely do each stretch
- Try to stretch often during the day

**AT HOME FLEXIBILITY STRETCHES**

*Tri-fold brochure – 8.5" X 11"*

This part of the program is to be printed and distributed to employees as a take home brochure. Explain that these stretches compliment the other parts of the program by helping employees increase their flexibility and take advantage of the health benefits of flexible muscles.

Explain that when we do physical work, our muscles become tight and can even become shortened. Shortened muscles result in difficulty moving and doing everyday activities. To avoid shortening of the muscles, workers who do physical jobs should work at maintaining flexibility in their muscles. This can be done by spending a few minutes stretching each day.

Suggest that these stretches can be done while watching television, or with their children. Encourage your employees to involve their families in stretching with them and make it fun.

For employees who engage in sports or physical activities outside of the workplace, remind them of the importance of stretching after physical activities.

The stretches contained in this program can be done after a jog, a workout at the gym, playing hockey, raking the leaves, or any time they have a few minutes. Stretching is most beneficial when it is done daily.

**Key Points:**

- Never overstretch – you should feel a slight pull, but never any pain
- Stop if you feel dizzy, uncomfortable, or experience any pain
- Take deep slow breaths and try to extend your stretch on the exhale
- Wear comfortable clothes that don’t restrict your movement
- Work slowly on your flexibility – it takes time
- Everyone can increase their flexibility if they work at it
- Have fun and encourage your whole family to stretch with you
- Stretching can be done while watching television
- Hold each stretch for 15-30 seconds to allow your muscles to relax
PREVENTING MSDs: HOW WE CAN HELP

MSDs account for almost half of all injuries in which workers need to take time off work in Ontario. These injuries result in substantial costs to the medical and workers’ compensation system. And, they greatly reduce the profitability and productivity of Ontario businesses.

WSPS offers a full range of ergonomics consulting services, training and resources designed to give workplace parties the knowledge and skills to recognize, assess and control MSD hazards.

Consulting
- Ergonomic assessments and audits
- Job task analyses
- Physical demands analyses
- Implementation of MSD prevention and ergonomics programs

Training
- Self-study including e-courses
- Ergonomics team/JHSC training
- Safety talks/awareness sessions
- Practical office ergonomics
- MSD prevention and safe lifting
- Physical demands analyses

Resources
Visit our website for access to a comprehensive selection of guidelines, publications, articles, tip sheets, checklists and other free downloads and e-tools.

Choose WSPS as your trusted advisor and tap into a wealth of information, resources and expertise.

For more information, CONTACT US TODAY!

WORKPLACE SAFETY & PREVENTION SERVICES
Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) is a leader in providing impactful risk management solutions that drive lasting business success for our customers. WSPS offers unparalleled health & safety expertise, insight and solutions for creating healthy work environments where employees thrive and businesses prosper.

A dynamic $43-million organization servicing 154,000 member firms, WSPS is primarily focused on the agricultural, industrial/manufacturing and service sectors. A key player in the Ontario occupational health & safety system, WSPS brings together community and business leaders to influence positive change to create a safer and more profitable Ontario.

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