

# Stretching exercises

## Explain dangers

Getting ready for the job means more than lining up tools and material. We should get our muscles ready too. Exercising before work can help prevent back, neck, and shoulder injuries.

## Demonstrate

We recommend you hand out IHSA's **Before You Start Work** exercises card (VO12) to your employees. Learn to do the exercises before you give the talk. Demonstrate each exercise to the group, and ask the group to do it after you.

CAUTION: Participation must be voluntary. If workers have any doubts about their ability to do the exercises safely, they should not do them. If they feel any pain, they should stop immediately.

### Warm up first

This helps to get your muscles warm and loose. A warm muscle is a lot less likely to tear than a cold one.

### March in Place

Stand in position. Pump your arms and legs in opposite directions. Make sure that your heels touch the ground. Continue 3 to 5 minutes.



### Arm Circles

Stand with arms raised horizontally and slightly in front of shoulders, palms down, and feet shoulder-width apart. Rotate arms in a forward circular motion for 15 seconds. Relax. Repeat 3 to 5 times.

Now we're ready for some stretching exercises. They should be performed in a slow, controlled manner and held in a sustained stretch for 20 to 30 seconds. Avoid bouncy, jerky movements. Stretch only to a comfortable position, not to the point of pain.

### Knee to Chest

Support yourself with one hand. With your free hand, pull your knee toward your chest and hold it for 30 seconds. Repeat with the other leg. Repeat 3 times for each leg.



### Hip Stretch

Stand with one foot in front of the other. Place your hands just above the knee of your front leg. Gently bend your front knee. Keep your back foot flat on the floor. Hold 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat with other leg. Repeat 3 times for each leg.

### Thigh Stretch

Support yourself with one hand. With your free hand, bend your leg back and grasp your ankle. Gently pull your ankle towards your body. Keep your trunk straight. Hold 20 to 30 seconds. Then repeat with the other leg. Repeat 3 times for each leg.



### Calf Stretch

Lean on a solid support with your outstretched hands. Bend one leg forward and extend the other leg straight behind you. Slowly move your hips forward. Keep the heel of your back leg on the ground. Hold 30 seconds, relax, and repeat with the other leg. Repeat 3 times for each leg.



### Backward Stretch

Stand up and bend backwards, holding for 2 to 4 seconds. Repeat 3 times. This will help relieve lower-back muscle tension. Do this stretch after working in a crouched, bent, or stooped position.

