

Exercises for Fiber Artists

Stretches for neck, shoulders and upper back

To reduce overall fatigue and tightness in your neck, shoulders and upper back, take the time to do some or all of these exercises at least once every hour.

- *Neck stretches*

Side Stretch: Bring your right ear toward your right shoulder, keeping your head and shoulders facing front. Hold this position for a few seconds, then slowly bring your head back up. Repeat, bringing the left ear toward the left shoulder.



Front & Back Stretch: Bring your chin to your chest, keeping your shoulders down. Hold this position for a few seconds, then slowly bring your head back up. Now reach your chin up toward the ceiling, tilting your head back. Hold this position for a few seconds, then slowly bring your head back down.

Repeat all stretches several times, moving slowly through each position.

Variation: For a slightly more intense forward neck stretch, interlace fingers behind your head and gently press down on your head with your chin reaching toward your chest.



- *Neck twists*

Slowly turn your head to look toward the right, keeping your head upright and your shoulders down. Hold this position for a few seconds, then slowly turn your head back to center. Now turn your head to look toward the left, duplicating the movements you took for the right side. Repeat movements on each side three times.



Variation: Turn your head toward your right shoulder, bringing your chin down toward your chest. Hold this position for a few seconds, then return your head and neck to upright, looking forward. Repeat for the left side.



- *Neck rolls*

Very slowly begin to rotate your head and neck in a complete circle, with your arms relaxed at your sides. Complete three rotations in one direction, then switch directions for another three revolutions. *Be careful not to rotate too quickly to avoid neck injury!*



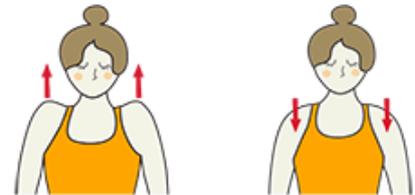
- *Hands behind head, gentle backbend*

Sit up tall and interlace your fingers behind your head., elbows wide. Slowly raise your chin, looking up. Hold for a few seconds. Then slowly bring your head down, chin toward your chest, keeping your fingers interlaced behind your head and elbows wide. Hold for a few seconds, then slowly raise your head back to your starting position and release your hands.



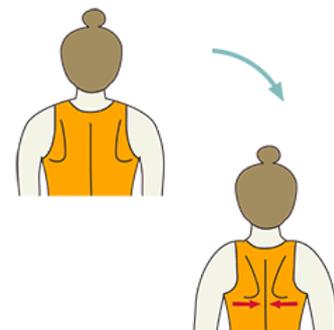
- *Shoulders lift and drop*

Bring your shoulder up to your ears and hold for 3-5 seconds. Then relax your shoulders down. Repeat several times.



- *Shoulder blade squeeze*

This movement may be done either sitting or standing. Begin with arms hanging straight down by your sides. Without lifting your shoulders, squeeze your shoulder blades together expanding your chest. Hold for a few seconds, then release.



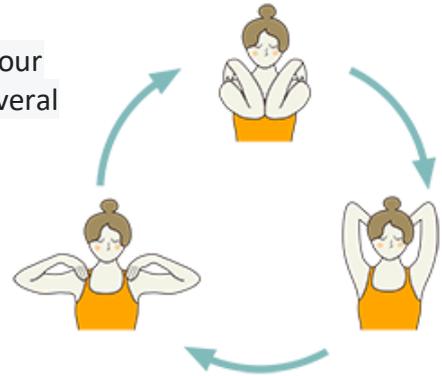
- *Shoulder rolls*

This movement may be done either standing or sitting. With your arms hanging loosely at your sides, rotate your right shoulder from front to back in a complete circle. Complete three circles in this direction, then rotate another three circles from back to front. Repeat with the left shoulder. Then, rotate both shoulders together – first front to back for three rotations, then back to front for another three rotations.



- *Shoulder rolls with bent elbows*

Place your fingertips on your shoulders. Make circles with your elbows, rotating around the shoulders. After completing several rotations, switch directions for your rotation.



- *Shoulder movement front to back*

Start by sitting or standing up straight, head and neck straight and gaze forward. Keeping your head and neck straight, roll your shoulders forward, collapsing your chest. Hold for a second, then return your shoulders to straight. Next, roll your shoulders back, expanding your chest forward. Hold for a second, then return your shoulders to straight. Repeat several times.



- *Hand to shoulder stretch*

Draw your left arm across your body, placing your left hand onto your right shoulder. Grab your left elbow with your right hand and draw your elbow into your chest, feeling a stretch in your left shoulder. Repeat with the right arm.



- *Overhead shoulder stretch*

Raise your right arm toward the ceiling. Bend your elbow and bring your right hand down to rest on the center of your upper back. Reach your left hand up and grab your right elbow.



Pull gently on your right elbow with your left hand. After a few moments, release your arms and repeat on the other side.

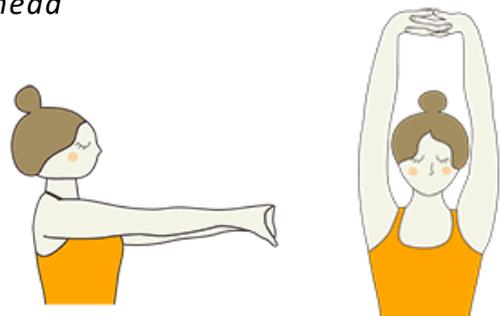
- *Shoulder stretch with hands interlaced behind the back*

This movement is best done standing up. Begin by bringing your hands behind your back and interlacing your fingers. Take a deep breath to straighten your spine. As you exhale, begin to stretch your interlaced hands away from your back – only as far as you can stretch without beginning to bend forward. Draw your shoulder blades down your back and expand your chest forward. After a few moments, **release your arms and interlaced fingers down to your lower back first**, and then release your fingers. Shake out your arms and hands.



- *Interlaced hands – in front and raised overhead*

Extend both arms out in front, elbows straight. Interlace your fingers, then flip your wrists so your palms are facing out. Raise your arms overhead, keeping the interlace of your fingers and elbows straight. Hold for a few seconds, then lower your arms and release your fingers.



- *Figure 8 with shoulder rotations*

This movement may be done either standing or sitting in a chair. The purpose of this exercise is to open and stretch the upper arm muscles at the shoulder joint, but care should be taken if you feel any discomfort.

Interlace your fingers in front of your chest, with your elbows up. Begin to make a figure 8 shape, leading with your elbows. Start with small circles and slowly increase size and movement. If this movement puts too much strain on your shoulders, make your movements smaller.

