

- The first thing about stretching is you need to do the exercises regularly for them to be successful.
- Second thing is that the stretch needs to be done with proper technique and proper length of time, for it to be effective in focusing on the right muscle, and to acquire the proper physiological reaction (overall relaxation of the muscle).
- All stretches should be done at least twice and held for 30-45 seconds with sustained pressure (don't bounce).

Wrists

For the wrist being stretched the elbow needs to be fully extended. For your wrist flexors stretch, supinate your wrist so your palm is up. Use your other hand to grasp the wrist being stretched, where your fingers meet your palm, on the palm side, and pull it toward your body. To add an extra pull make sure the fingers get fully extended as well.

For your wrist extensors turn your wrist over, and repeat same method pulling your wrist toward your body putting the pressure on the back side of your hand where your knuckles are. For a full affect add some finger flexion to this part of the stretch.

Fingers and Thumbs

Do one finger at a time and stretch each joint every range it can go. This includes your thumb. Use your other hand starting at your first knuckle and fully extend, then flex then abduct and adduct this joint. Move to next knuckle and fully flex and extend, and do the same for the last. For your thumb it is actually the same as you fingers, all the way to the last joint.

Elbow

For your triceps fully extend your arm and hold it up as if to ask a question in class. Second, bend at the elbow to reach the back of your head. Third step with other arm, reach over top of your head, grab bent elbow and simultaneously pull it medially and downward.

For a good biceps stretch, fully extend your arm with a straight elbow and turn your hand over with your palm up. Then find something like a ledge or wall to prop your hand on and bend your knees keeping your back straight and feel the pull along the front of shoulder and biceps muscle.

Shoulder

Pectoralis muscle has three stretches. All of them included you standing an arms length away from either a door frame or a wall. Put your arm straight, elbow 90 degrees perpendicular from your body against the wall propping your hand firmly against the wall so it doesn't move. Take a step along side the wall. You should feel a good pull across your chest. Repeat this again with your arm an extra 45 degrees up the wall and fully abducted.

Latissimus Dorsi stretch is very important for your back as well as shoulder. Position yourself the same as the tricep stretch. Instead of putting pressure on your elbow medially and downward lean your torso away from the bent arm and then flex torso. Should feel pull along back and side of rib cage.

This stretch is best done sitting. It is for your upper trapezius. The side to be stretched, use that side arm to grab bottom of chair, to anchor shoulder. Bring other arm straight over head to opposite ear and then pull body away from anchored shoulder simultaneously putting a downward press on your head. You should feel a good stretch across neck into shoulder.

Other shoulder stretches should be full circumduction of shoulder to maintain full ROM.

Neck:

Neck stretching is very important. While sitting you can easily stretch neck muscles by either rotating, laterally flexing (scalenes muscle) and rotating while extending (SCM muscle) as far as you can then take either of your hands and put over pressure on until you feel a nice steady pull on the intended area.

- These stretches done will not work miracles but with the hectic stress that you as dental hygienists put on your body, done throughout your day should be enough maintenance to ensure a long healthy professional career.
- Along with the stretches there are some strengthening exercises that should be done weekly to keep your body balanced.
 - Bent over Rows, Seated Rows, or any Rowing exercises help maintain proper posture by strengthening upper and middle back muscles (Rhomboids, lower trapezius, middle trapezius) which as a hygienist you stretch and stress all day.
 - Latissimus pull downs work similar areas as rowing. It is a larger muscle group that gets work though. It strengthens your whole back and shoulders which also get challenged with dental hygienist typical work.
- Other exercises that would help would be anything for back, abdominals, shoulders, arms and wrist exercises. Because the healthier the muscles are the less likely your posture will be to effect them.
- **Warning Signs: Headaches, unexplained blurred vision, decreased range of motion, ear aches, anesthesia (insensitivity to pain), paraesthesia (abnormal sensitivity to pain), tingling sensation on any area of your back, shoulder arm and or hand, discoloration of hands, hands unusually cold, un explained pain in back, shoulders, arms or wrists with or without motion.**