

MICRO-BREAKS

The human body is designed for movement. Holding any one posture for a prolonged period of time increases stiffness and tension. As a result, sitting is a common cause of low back and neck pain.

Many manufacturers and stores advertise that their chair will prevent back and neck pain. However, there is no perfect chair, except the one you get out of frequently!

As a general rule you should avoid sitting for longer than 20 minutes without getting up. If you sit for longer than that you begin to accumulate a debt in your tissues that will have to be paid. What is shown here are 'micro-breaks' which you can perform to erase that debt.

If you get up every 20-30 minutes you won't require a long 'micro-break'. However, if you sit for hours on end then any length break may not be sufficient to help you avoid developing a neck or back problem.

The standing overhead arm reach

Your starting position:

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart.

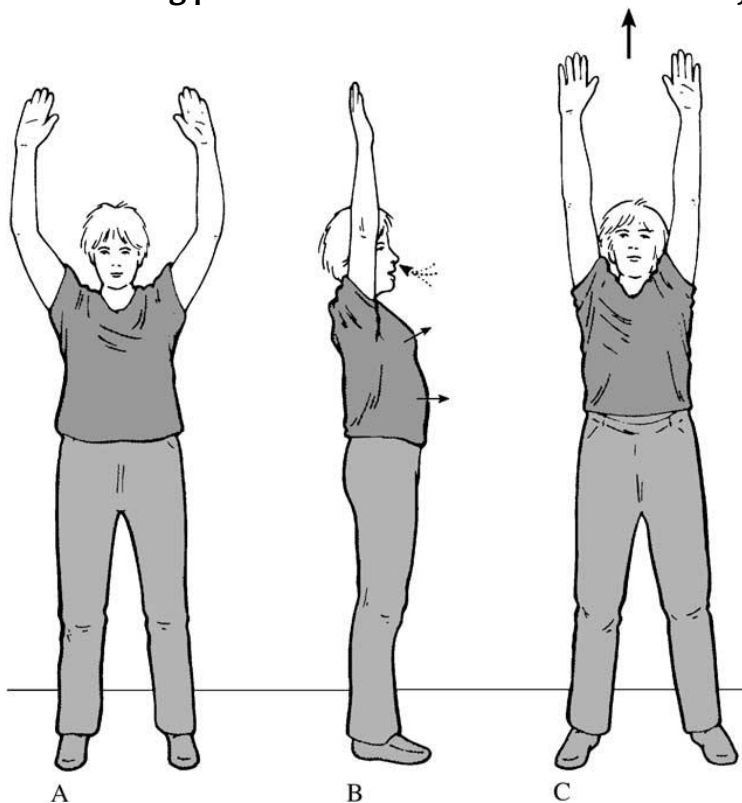


Fig.1 the standing overhead arm reach (A) gently raise arms; (B) take a deep breath in through the nose; (C) hold the breath while reaching up as high as you comfortably can, and then release the breath through the mouth and go back to starting position.

The exercise:

- Gently raise your arms overhead
- Take a deep breath in, through your nose, and hold the breath.
- Reach your arms up to the ceiling as high as possible without letting your breath go.
- Then let the breath go as you drop your arms.

Repetitions: 2-3

Frequency: Every 30 min when sitting for extended periods of time (See Fig. 1)

The standing Brugger exercise

Your starting position:

- Stand with your feet slightly further apart than your hips.
- Turn your feet out slightly
- Tuck your chin in slightly, as if nodding 'yes'

The exercise:

- Breathe in (through your nose) to your abdomen.
- Then exhale slowly while at the same time: Turning your palms out, with fingers extended and raising your breastbone towards your chin slightly.

Repetitions: 2-3

Frequency: Every 20 minutes when sitting for extended periods of time (see Fig. 2).

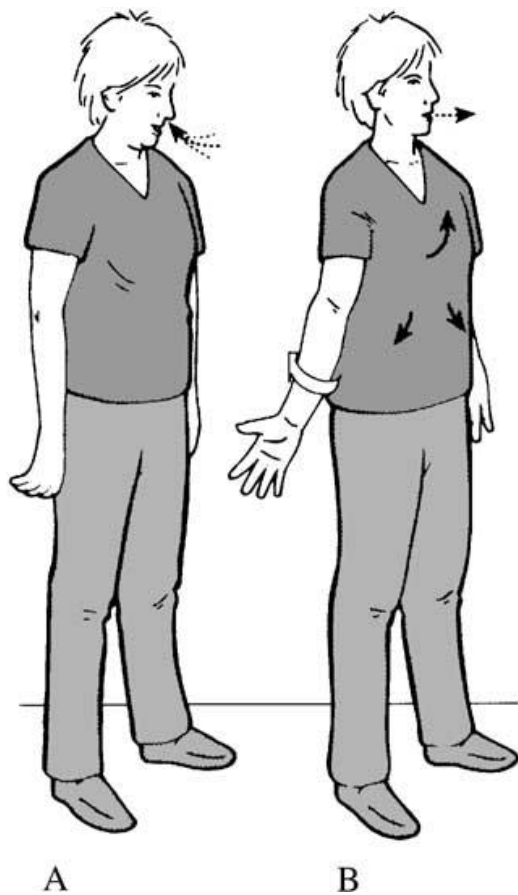


Fig.2 The standing Brugger exercise: (A) beginning position; (B) final position