

Do workplace stretching programs help prevent injuries?

- Research studies on stretching programs and injury prevention have had mixed results.
- Stretching programs can have other benefits, but there are also potential downsides.
- Stretching programs should not take resources away from more effective injury prevention measures.

Research does not support the use of workplace stretching for injury reduction

Researchers have studied stretching and injury prevention with workers as well as athletes, with mixed results. A few studies have found some modest reductions in injuries and time off work. Other studies have found no reduction in injuries, and even some negative effects of stretching. A number of the studies were unable to provide clear results because many workers would drop out of the stretching programs before the study ended.

Stretching programs can have other benefits

Even though stretching programs may not help prevent injuries, stretching can benefit workers in other ways:

- Increased flexibility and blood flow
- Decreased stiffness, pain and discomfort
- Improved feelings of overall fitness and well-being
- Stronger connections to co-workers and a shared sense of purpose

Downsides of stretching

If not done properly, stretching can cause or aggravate sprain and strain injuries rather than prevent them. Static stretching, where workers hold a stretch for 15 to 30 seconds, can temporarily:

- Reduce muscle strength
- Affect balance and coordination
- Slow reaction times

Another potential downside to stretching is that it can give workers a false sense of security. They may feel that they can work longer and harder, possibly increasing their risk for injury.

Creating effective programs

In order for it to be safe and effective, a workplace stretching program should be designed by an expert. The program should prepare workers for the specific types of work that they do, and take into account the workers' current physical condition.

You might think of a stretching program more as a wellness effort rather than an injury prevention one. If your goal is to reduce workplace injuries, good safety, health and ergonomics programs are effective and offer a good return on investment.

We can help you find the right solution for your workplace

We have [consultants who can work with you to find practical solutions](#) to reduce injury risk. We've also outlined a [process that you can use to find and fix the hazards](#) that cause sprains and strains.