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How To Exercise While You Sit

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I've written recently about the sequences I designed for our military to help with the stress of their work, and I'd like to share some of this with you. Let's focus first on poses you can do while just sitting in a chair.

Whether you are a fighter pilot or a "desk jockey," sitting all day is very hard on the body, even with fancy or expensive chairs. Sitting contributes to collapsed posture and low energy levels -- conditions that are far too common today. It shortens and contracts muscles in the legs and torso, and tends to exacerbate rounded shoulders and stress in the neck. Slouching inhibits digestion, causes constipation and low back pain as well as neck pain, and compromises breathing, which impairs clear thinking and leads to brain fatigue and poor decisions. It dulls the immune system so that you are more inclined to get sick and be irritable. When you are slumping, your productivity tends to decrease

dramatically.

Fortunately I have some simple poses that will help you. I've done a lot of yoga poses in airline seats since I fly a lot; these are some that are helpful to me!

Let's start by learning how to breathe. Inhale and expand the ribs, feeling for moving the ribs all the way up into the armpit. Exhale, pull the belly in emptying all the used air out. This helps purify the lungs which raises your energy levels and increases your metabolism. Breathe like this throughout all these poses -- and in the rest of your life!

Spinal Twist: While sitting in your chair, do a simple twist to release the back. Inhale, sit tall. Take your right hand across the torso to the left arm rest, left hand on the back of the chair. Exhale, twist to the left. Stay for five breaths and then switch sides.

Shoulder Shrugs: These massage out upper back and neck tightness and strengthen the upper back which helps you sit up straight. Inhale, hold the breath. Lift your shoulders high up to the ears and squeeze them straight back. Exhale, squeeze your upper shoulder blades together and drag them down the back. Keep the arms relaxed. Inhale, breath into your upper back. Exhale, pull your mid-shoulder blades together and down. Inhale, broaden the upper back. Exhale, squeeze the bottom tips of your shoulder blades together, elbows squeezing towards each other and drag down. Do three sets.

Neck Release: Follow the shrugs with a gentle neck release. First, put your left hand, palm down, under your left sit bone, fingers pointing toward tailbone. Lean right, relax your right ear toward your right shoulder. Keep the chest

lifted. Breathe into the stretch on left side of neck; relax into the stretch.

Step two, if you have a neck injury, leave your right arm down through this exercise. If your neck is okay, reach the right arm up over head and wrap the fingers lightly around the jaw. Allow the weight of the arm to increase the stretch in the neck, do not pull on your neck. Then, roll the head one inch toward chest. Breathe deeply into the new stretch on the left side of the neck, relaxing the neck. Finally, release the top hand, bow the chin towards the chest, putting both hands on your knees. Take one full breath into the back of the neck, keeping the back of the neck long. Then use the left palm at the center of the forehead, inhale and ease the head up. Repeat on both sides.

Agni Sara: If you have high blood pressure, only hold the breath for a couple of pumps per round. If you are pregnant, wait until after delivery to do this.

To work the abs getting them stronger, more toned and supporting the back, experiment with Agni Sara while sitting. This needs to be done with the belly empty of food. Inhale, forcefully exhale through the mouth, chin down towards chest. Empty of breath, pump the belly in and out by alternately pulling the belly up and back towards the spine then relaxing it completely. Do three to five pumps before inhaling. When you need to inhale, let the belly go and take a deep breath. Do a few rounds then stretch the abs by clasping the hands above the head, arms straight, arching back slightly over the chairs back rest. Keep both sit bones down on the chair -- don't flip over!

Back Release Pose: This exercise is for the thighs, hips

and lower back. Cross one ankle over the opposite thigh, knee opening out to the side, exhale and lean forward over legs. Relax the neck and arms. Hold for five breaths and then do the other side.

In every desk job I've encountered, the hands and wrists are crucial. It's important to take care of them by doing wrist stretches. Here's one variation: straighten your arm in front of you, spread the palm facing away from your torso, fingertips toward the floor. Use the other hand to pull one finger at a time slowly back, holding each finger for a full inhale and exhale.

Finally, to really get your blood pumping and energy up, get out of that chair and into yoga class at the end of the day -- or pop in that workout DVD that's been sitting on your TV table!

(Go to www.forrestyoga.com to find a Forrest Yoga teacher near you and order DVDs. My new book is at [Amazon](#) or [Indiebound](#).)