

# Ask the Personal Trainer: 5 Office Workout Tips

How Can I Squeeze in Activity at Work?

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**Ask the  
Personal  
Trainer**

**Q:** Do you have any suggestions for incorporating exercise into a day at a desk? I need ideas for upper arms and inner thighs, in particular.

**A:** With the collective acceptance of exercise in the workplace these days, it's not uncommon to find people flexing while they file! Here are some basic movements that can help strengthen your muscles. (While we encourage you to keep fit, be sure that your exercises and the office equipment you use for them are safe.)

## **Chair Dips**

While sitting at your desk, try doing "chair dips." This is for the triceps on the back of your upper arm. Begin by placing your palms on your armrests, and push yourself up out of your chair. (Be careful if your chair has wheels or is unsteady.) Initially, you should use your legs to help offset the resistance. As you get stronger, you can rely less on your legs and more on your arms. Perform 15 repetitions. Do only one set to start, then gradually work up to two or three sets of 15 repetitions as you become more fit.

## **Desk Push-Ups**

From a standing position, you could do a modified "desk push-up." This will work your triceps, along with your chest and shoulders. Put your arms on the edge of the desk and then walk your feet back until your body is straight. Lower yourself toward the desk so that your chest nearly touches it. Push back up until your arms are straight. (This activates considerably more muscle fibers than the chair dips, so don't do too many to start, or you'll be sore for days!) Try one set of 15 repetitions and see how you feel the next day.

### **Arm Curls**

For your biceps muscles, any type of arm-curl exercise will be beneficial. For example, you might use something like a briefcase, or anything else with a handle. Perform the curl with your elbow close to your side. This will help reduce the overall strain on your lower back and maximize the workout on your biceps muscles. For a good isometric (static-type) exercise, when seated in front of your desk, reach your arms forward and grasp the under portion of the top of your desk with both hands (palms up); then, slowly and steadily, pull against that resistance and hold for about six seconds. Repeat four or five times.

### **Chair Squats**

For the legs and hips, you try a basic squat movement. You could actually do what are called "chair squats." It's as simple as going from the standing to seated position and repeating this movement for 15 repetitions. Keep your feet about shoulder width apart, and lower yourself to no less than 90 degrees at the knee. You may have to adjust your seat height accordingly.

### **Calf Raises**

While standing in the copier room waiting for 200 double-sided sheets to print, try some calf raises. All you have to do is lift yourself up onto your toes. Repeat 15 times. Take a breather and repeat. You may be able to tolerate more sets on this one since you use your calves with every step you take. But still, be careful not to overdo it, or you'll know about it for a few days.

**In this Q&A series, William Sukala, MS, CSCS, answers questions about fitness and exercise.**