

# The "Om" of Doing Nails

The downside of a full book is the toll it takes on your body. For those dealing with an aching back, tense shoulders, and tired eyes, relief may be found in yoga-inspired exercises that can be done in no time while sitting at your workstation.

BY JENNIFER ACOSTA SCOTT

It happens to everyone at some point. Lately, your eight-hour shifts feel more like 12 hours as you try to handle what seems like a never-ending stream of clients. Your neck, back, and shoulders constantly ache from the tension, and work is beginning to feel more like a dreaded chore than a career. Something has to be done — but who has the time (or money) for a week in the Caribbean?

Fortunately, there are simple ways to keep yourself stress-free on even the busiest workdays. Easy exercises inspired by the ancient Indian art of yoga can relieve the minor aches and mental strain caused by salon work, says Diana Fairechild, author of *Office Yoga: At-Your-Desk Exercises*. Nail technicians are particularly prone to sore muscles because they remain seated in one position for long periods of time, often slumping their

shoulders forward or hunching over.

"It's very much like computer work," says Fairechild. "You have to make the whole body rigid to have strength for that movement."

Several quick, daily sessions of seated yoga stretches can noticeably reduce job-related tension and restore mental alertness. It can even improve a bad mood, says Laura Anderson, a certified yoga instructor and Reiki master in Weatherford, Texas.

"If your body doesn't feel good, your emotions don't feel good," says Anderson. "It just all kind of rolls together."

Most of these moves take no longer than 30 seconds to complete, and all of them can be performed while seated. Use them when you find yourself dragging for a quick pick-me-up.

**EYE EXERCISES:** Eighty percent of your external stimulation comes through your eyes, Anderson says. To give them a break, rub your hands together briskly for a few seconds and place them over your eyes for a few seconds. Be careful not to press on your eye. When you are finished, move your eyes up and down and from side to side, focusing on both near and far objects, to break the monotony of staring at a single spot for a long time.

**BACK ROLL:** Lean forward in your chair, reaching down as far as you comfortably can. Making sure to stay centered, hang for a few moments and allow gravity to pull you down. When you are ready, slowly roll up one vertebra at a time. When done correctly, this move should offer relief for cramped backs, necks, and shoulders by elongating the spine.





**SEATED HALF-TWIST:** With your legs and feet facing forward, gently twist the upper half of your body to one side. Hold for four normal breaths, then return to center. The back is the major beneficiary of this exercise, though the hips are also stretched.



**SHOULDER AND CHEST STRETCH:** Put your hands on your shoulders and bring your elbows together as you breathe in deeply. As you slowly exhale, gradually move them apart again. "You're opening up the chest, and that's going to release the stress in the shoulders," Anderson says.



**BOW AND ARROW:** Bend your left arm and place your hand over your heart. Making sure to support your upper body weight evenly on both sides, lift your neck as though a string was attached to the top of your head. Raise both elbows, extending the right arm. Turn your head to the right and stare into the distance. Gently move your left arm back as though you were pulling back the string on a bow. Breathe in deeply, and release on the exhale. Repeat on the other side. Besides providing a good stretch, this exercise also helps refocus the eyes and maintain their elasticity. "It helps improve and keep your vision into your later years," says Fairechild.



**FINGER FITNESS:** Curl your hand into a fist and roll your wrists four to five times. Open your fists and gently pull each finger downward, elongating them slightly. Squeeze fingers together with opposite hand, two at a time. Exercising the fingers and wrists can often relieve minor aches associated with carpal tunnel syndrome and arthritis, Anderson says.



**BREATHING TECHNIQUES:** A technique known as "circle breathing" can help you refocus and refresh yourself. Push your chair slightly back from your workstation and inhale deeply for four counts, then exhale for another four. Repeat the cycle three or four times. "Instead of focusing on your work, you focus on your breath, and that brings you back to center," says Anderson. For an instant stress relief, also try "Sufi breath" — breathe in, exhale with a big sigh, then breathe in again and release quietly. ■

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*Jennifer Acosta Scott is a freelance writer based in Weatherford, Texas. Fairechild's book, *Office Yoga: At-Your-Desk Exercises*, includes 17 different stress-relieving yoga poses. Visit [www.flyana.com](http://www.flyana.com) for more information.*