

## APPA Effective and Innovative Practices

### The University of Texas at Austin Facilities Services

## Warm Up Program for Custodial Services

Custodial Services at The University of Texas at Austin is doing more than keeping our buildings in top shape. As time goes on, many of us find it harder to stay healthy. With hectic schedules we often forget to take care of ourselves. Recently, Custodial Services has looked at bringing focus to the well-being of its employees by taking a few minutes to prepare them physically and mentally for the start of their work day.



The United States Department of Labor statistics for 2010 found seven occupations with the highest level of injury rates in the United States. Custodial and janitorial workers rank third on the list, with a majority of the injuries attributable to strains and sprains due to overexertion. See <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/osh2.nr0.htm>. These findings are consistent with our experiences for the past few years, and we began looking for opportunities to reduce these trends in our workforce.

### FIT Start Warm Up Program



In the fall of 2010, Custodial Services began working with the university Kinesiology Department's Fitness Institute of Texas (FIT) to create a program specifically for our custodial staff. Like most universities, we are fortunate to have many resources available to us to supplement our expertise in a multitude of areas. Following a few visits with the Kinesiology Department's FIT staff we embarked on a cooperative effort to develop and implement a program aimed at reducing workplace injuries.

Development included looking at job descriptions for each function that is performed, then interviewing and observing our staff in action, and finally running some trial programs to see what did and didn't work for our staff. The goal of the warm up program is to prepare our employees for the demands of the job and help reduce the risk of injury. According to the Kinesiology Department, injuries can occur when our bodies are not ready to do what the job requires.

A warm up is helpful in two major ways:

First, it gets blood to our muscles that are needed for the activity or job demands. This movement of blood also warms up our bodies.

Second, the warm up increases the communication between our brain and our muscles, which reduces the risk of injury. For example, if we sit on the couch, our brain does not have to communicate with our muscles as no real movement is required. If we were to quickly jump up and start work, our brain will not have had the opportunity to communicate with our muscles to prepare them for the task



required. A warm up begins the communication process in an orderly manner that allows our muscles time to prepare for activity.



Once the basic movements were decided upon, collateral material needed to be developed. Materials consisted of a program booklet and posters that clearly illustrate the movements that would be required. (See attachments.) The booklets illustrated the movements and described what muscles were being warmed up with each movement. The steps for each movement were explained to assist in implementing the program and for refresher material to be available at any time. The posters were to be posted in areas where the warm ups would be performed as a ready reference while the warm ups were taking place.

The material included a name for the program that embodies its intent: to make our employees’ fit’ for duty each shift and to remind us that the warm ups would occur each day at the “start” of the shift. Hence the FIT Start Program was christened.

## Training the Trainers

The next phase of the project was to begin training our supervisors to carry out the training of their employees. One of the distinctions that had to be understood was the difference between warm ups, stretching and exercise. Trainers needed to understand that stretching is an activity that actually relaxes the muscles instead of getting them ready to work. Our movements are not stretches or exercises. They are not difficult, take only a few minutes to complete and will not make anyone sweat. Mark Faries, M.S., Kinesiology Department doctoral graduate assistant, led two train-the-trainer sessions for each shift of Custodial Services trainers.



## Program Roll-out

To roll the program out to all of our 342 custodial employees we again utilized the talents of Mark Faries to explain the value of the program. The importance of having a professional from an academic department is significant, as our staff immediately accepted the program as a professional program designed especially for



them. We have also found that our staff responds well to anyone affiliated with the university’s athletic programs. Collateral material was given to each employee to take home, as it not only covered information pertaining to the FIT Start Program but also included valuable information about nutrition and healthy lifestyles. This was done in an effort to complement employee health initiatives sponsored by the university’s Human Resource Department.

The program was received very positively from the start. In an environment that has included some budget reductions that can be a detriment to employee morale, a program that is all about caring for the health of the individual employee has gone a long way to illustrate the importance that the university places on each individual staff member.

The movements are a mandatory function of employment; however, the range of motion is dictated by the individual, with encouragement to do as much as is comfortable. Each crew area is evaluated on how well they

are doing with the program on a regular basis. Custodial Services has a 512-point internal audit that includes five items related to the Fit Start Program:

- Supervisor is willing to lead warm up movements.
- Supervisor encourages reluctant employees.
- Supervisor stresses the importance of the warm up movements and corrects form.
- Supervisor conducted warm ups in appropriate time frame.
- Supervisor can articulate worker's feelings towards the warm ups.

## Employee Surveys

In an effort to gauge how the program is being received and to watch for signals from staff that adjustments might be required, employee surveys were conducted. The initial survey was issued just two months following the program roll-out. We received responses from 61% of the workforce, with these results:

- 84% were “kind of” to “very willing” to perform the FIT Start warm-up movements.
- 85% found the movements “easy” to “very easy” to perform.
- 76% saw FIT Start movements as benefiting their performance and health while at work.
- 66% viewed these movements as benefiting their performance and health outside of work.
- 81% believe that the university is doing the right thing by initiating the FIT Start program.



Comments ranged from the enthusiastic to the skeptical. One employee wrote, “I absolutely love it! It helps to get my blood flowing faster through my body to tell my body it's time to work. Very good program!” On the other hand, another said, “I believe it is a waste of time.”

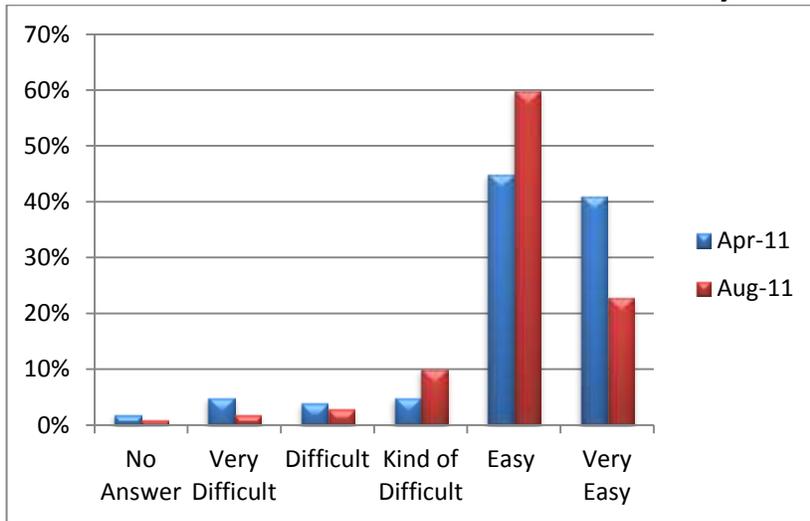
After conducting the program for six months, Custodial Services again surveyed its employees about the effectiveness of the FIT Start program. We received responses from 83% of our workforce, with these results:

- 82% viewed the difficulty of these movements “easy” to “very easy.”
- 55% would like to see changes to the movements.
- 75% saw FIT Start movements as benefiting their performance and health while at work.
- 62% viewed these movements as benefiting their performance and health outside of work.
- 73% believe that the university is doing the right thing by continuing the FIT Start program.

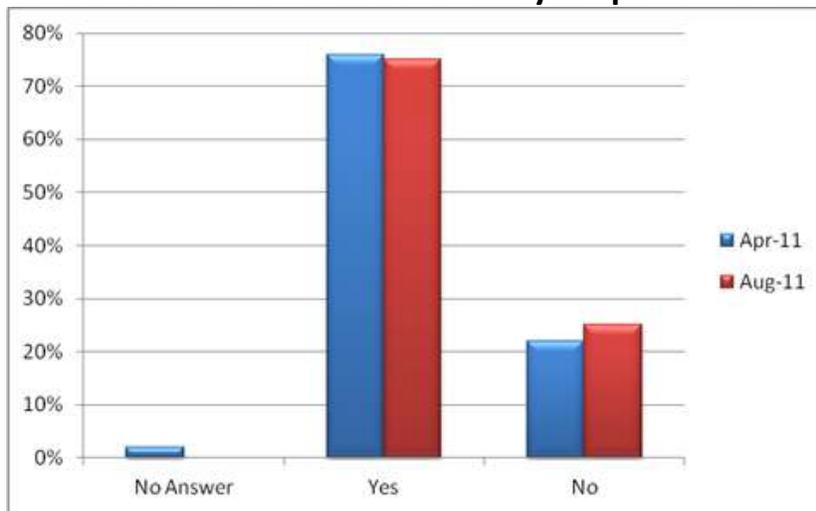
Comments again ranged from mostly positive to some that were less enthusiastic. One employee wrote, “It’s great because it keeps you healthy and the exercises are described well!” Another said, “Perhaps more traditional stretching exercises would be beneficial.”

Following are the results of both surveys:

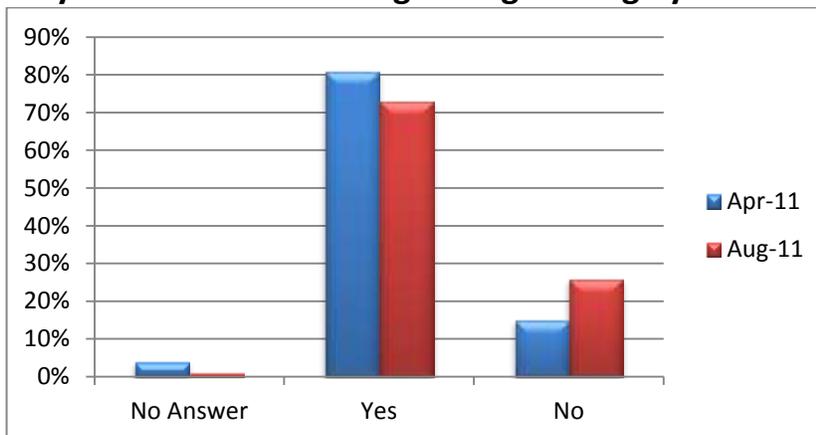
**How difficult have these movements been for you to perform?**



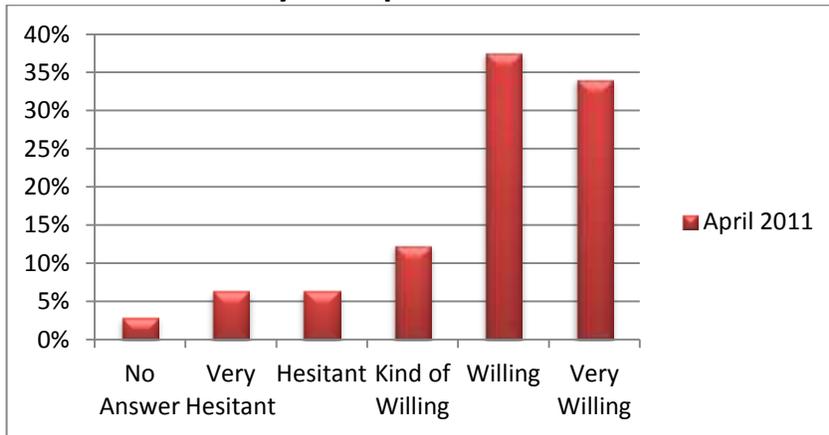
**Have these movements benefited your performance and health while at work?**



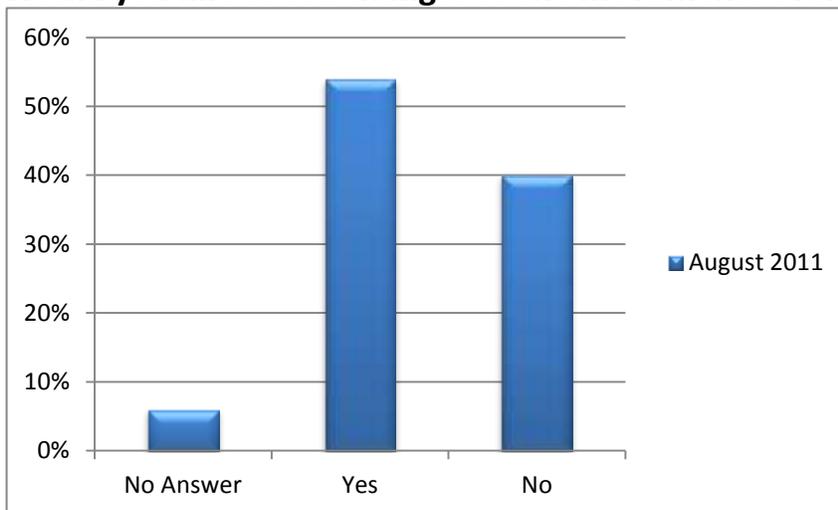
**Do you believe UT is doing the right thing by continuing the FIT Start program?**



### How hesitant are you to perform the Fit Start warm-up movements?



### Would you like to see changes to the movements every couple of years?

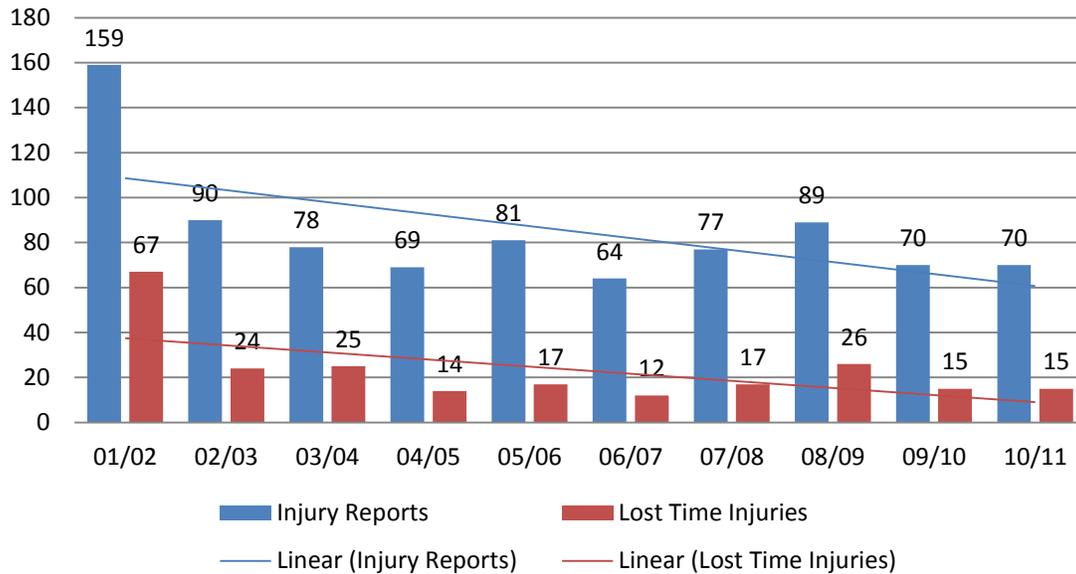


The response rate was extremely high for each of the surveys, and responses were largely very positive, with some individual’s comments illustrating life-changing results. We will issue another survey at the one year anniversary of the program, with an emphasis on getting feedback about what areas should be revised for the coming year. The understanding between Custodial Services and the Kinesiology Department is that we will revise the program each year to keep it fresh and to address current needs as determined by accident occurrence and type of accident.

### Accident Reduction

While accident rates and lost time injuries have remained static since implementation of the program, it is important to note that Custodial Services has experienced reductions in staff and increases in cleanable square footage during this timeframe. Injuries typically would have been expected to increase as a result. They did not.

## Custodial Services WCI Trends



## Supporting Facilities Services' Goals & Values

One of the strategic goals of Facilities Services is to have a highly motivated, well trained, stable workforce. Bringing a program to our staff that promotes wellness and physically gets them ready for their shift each day has been motivating, and reducing the possibilities of accidents will create additional stability in the workforce.

The core values of Facility Services are service, integrity, teamwork, excellence and stewardship. This project supports the values in the following ways:

### Service

The FIT Start Program enhances wellness in our workforce, which results in better customer service on a daily basis as more custodians are available and ready to perform to the best of their abilities.

### Integrity

The FIT Start Program illustrates the university's commitment to each individual employee by creating a program meant to enhance the employee's wellness both at work and at home. By making each employee responsible for doing the movements to the best of his or her abilities, the program relies on the integrity of the individual.

### Teamwork

The effort of Facilities Services and Custodial Services leadership to reach out to the Kinesiology Department demonstrates the benefits of creative collaboration in problem-solving. The basic activity of performing the FIT Start movements at the beginning of each shift enhances teamwork and gets every shift started as a group working together to improve the lives of each individual and to improve the daily performance of the group.

The continued efforts of both Custodial Services and the Kinesiology Department resulted in the two organizations coming together to present the FIT Start material at the National OS1 Users Group

Symposium in Salt Lake City, Utah in July of 2010. The two organizations also worked with ManageMen (OS1 parent organization) to reach an agreement to roll the FIT Start Program out under the title “OS1 Team Warm-ups”. The program is now an official part of the OS1 Process that is utilized by many universities and other organizations across the United States.

### **Excellence**

This creative approach addresses the work and personal health needs of staff members who are at a greater risk of injury than many employees. It illustrates the desire to seek continuous improvement at all levels in the organization.

### **Stewardship**

By seeking help within the university to solve a problem, costs are reduced, familiarity is enhanced and continuous improvement to the program in the future will be expedited. Both organizations benefit from the project as custodial employees enjoy a healthier life and the Kinesiology Department gains expertise in an area that they had not worked in before. Additionally, employees gain awareness of the personal and organizational value of stewardship.

### **Institutional Benefit**

The university has benefitted from this program in several ways. The Kinesiology Department had never worked with another organization before to develop a program for the organization’s employees. While they certainly provide a large array of services to all university employees, Kinesiology had never worked under contract with an individual component of the university to achieve a goal directed at only that component’s employee base.



The program was recognized in several ways including being awarded The Best Cleaning Industry Safety and Health Program Award at the National OS1 Users Symposium in 2011.

Having the program adopted by and for OS1 Users across the nation also served to recognize the efforts of both Custodial Services and the Kinesiology Department.

An unexpected form of recognition has been receiving the attention of non-custodial workers across campus. In several instances an administrative employee has witnessed the warm ups and has asked if we could do something similar for their group.

### **Innovation, Creativity, and Originality**

Leadership within Custodial Services realized that workplace injuries were an issue with custodial employees and sought a way to address the issue. The University of Texas at Austin has an effective Worker’s Compensation Program that does an excellent job of providing healthcare and reduced duty for workers that have been injured. However, we wanted to get in front of the injury management process by reducing the occurrence of injuries instead of only managing them after they had happened. It would have been simple to have just created a generic stretching or exercise program, but by involving the right people in creating the correct solution we were able to provide a program specifically designed for our workforce.

## Portability and Sustainability

This type of program can be replicated and adapted to address any regional or occupational differences. Adoption of the program by the OS1 Users indicates that regional differences are easily overcome. The Kinesiology Department had no previous experience with custodial staff and learned what they needed to know about our staff through observation, evaluations of our physical demands information and through meeting with various staff across the organization. This same method could be utilized to create programs for landscape staff or trades positions.

While Custodial Services does plan to update the program on a regular basis, the warm ups would continue to be effective as they are. The reason that we will continuously seek improvement is to keep the program fresh and enjoyable and to maintain the most effective program possible.



## Management Involvement and Employee Commitment

Involvement of management in this project is clearly demonstrated in the level of resources that were allocated. From the initial meetings with Kinesiology staff through the evaluation of employee surveys, Custodial Services management has driven this project. The ongoing commitment of each level within the Custodial Services hierarchy is evident in the daily participation of more than 300 individuals. From the auditors that assure that each group remains in compliance, to the crew leaders who lead the warm ups, to each and every custodial employee that starts their day, every day with the FIT Start Program, commitment is evident.

The level of response to our FIT Start surveys has been phenomenal. Many surveys are considered successful if 20% of the solicited group responds. Custodial staff responded at 61% in the initial survey and 83% in second survey. While the vast majority of those surveyed were positive about the program, even the minority that responded negatively to the program did respond, illustrating the impact that the program has had and the level of interest and commitment of staff.

## Documentation, Analysis, Customer Input, and Benchmarking



We were fortunate to have solid documentation relating to the physical demands and specific movements required to perform custodial work prior to contacting the Kinesiology Department. The analysis they performed to establish what movements were needed to warm up the specific muscles we would utilize for each task is a component of their academic body of knowledge. As this is the only program of its kind that we are aware of, it is difficult to perform much benchmarking other than the assessments of other organizations that have adopted the program through their OS1 affiliation. The customers for this project were the 300 plus custodial staff, and as demonstrated by the survey responses the feedback loop has been quite robust.

The employees that have benefitted from this program have provided valuable input throughout the project. Employee suggestions were added to the training for the benefit of others. In what has been one of the indicators of the success of the project, many of the newly trained employees have begun to further their wellness programs on their own, and many have made comments regarding how their health has improved.

## Fit Start Poster

<h1>S</h1>	<h3>Swing the Arms</h3>		<h3>20 Swings</h3>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand up straight. Feet as wide as hips.</li> <li>• Arms straight out to the side. Level with shoulders.</li> <li>• Slowly <b>Swing the arms</b> backwards in large circle motion.</li> <li>• Squeeze shoulder blades together as you circle your arms back.</li> </ul>
<h1>T</h1>	<h3>Twist the Body</h3>		<h3>20 Twists</h3>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand up straight. Feet wider than shoulders.</li> <li>• Arms straight out to the side. Level with shoulders. Palms down.</li> <li>• Slowly <b>Twist</b> your upper body left and right.</li> <li>• Keep arms out straight.</li> </ul>
<h1>A</h1>	<h3>Alternate &amp; Sink</h3>		<h3>10 Sinks</h3>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Alternate</b> your feet with one foot in front of the other. Use wall for support.</li> <li>• Feet should be 2-3 feet apart.</li> <li>• Bend both knees, <b>Sink</b> your body straight toward ground.</li> <li>• Switch legs &amp; Repeat.</li> </ul>
<h1>R</h1>	<h3>Reach &amp; Fold</h3>		<h3>10 Reaches</h3>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand up straight. Feet as wide as hips.</li> <li>• <b>Reach</b> your arms straight above your head.</li> <li>• <b>Fold</b> forward at the hips keeping legs straight.</li> <li>• Keep your back straight.</li> </ul>
<h1>T</h1>	<h3>Touch &amp; Toss</h3>		<h3>10 Tosses</h3>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand up straight. Feet as wide as hips.</li> <li>• Squat and <b>Touch</b> your knees with your hands.</li> <li>• Stand and <b>Toss</b> your arms upward as if you were tossing a ball into the air.</li> <li>• Keep your back straight</li> </ul>

Fit Start Booklet



**CUSTODIAL SERVICES WARM UP PROGRAM**

**FITNESS INSTITUTE *of* TEXAS™**

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN



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# Introduction

**FIT START** is a start-of-shift warm up developed by experts at the Fitness Institute of Texas (FIT). FIT is a part of the department of Kinesiology and Health Education at The University of Texas at Austin. Their expertise combined with input from your peers, coworkers and supervisors helped create a program specifically designed for you and your needs.

## *Why a Warm Up Program?*

The goal of this warm up program is to prepare your body for the demands of your job and help reduce the risk of injury. Injury can occur when your body is not ready to do what the job requires. A warm up is helpful in two major ways.

First, it gets blood to your muscles that are needed for activity or job demands. This movement of blood also “warms up “ your body.

Second, the warm up increases the communication between your brain and your muscles, which reduces the risk of injury.

For example, if you sit on the couch, your brain does not have to communicate with your muscles. If you quickly jump up and start work, your brain will try its best to communicate with the muscles, but will not be prepared to do so. Warm up of the muscles gets our bodies ready to handle the duties of the job more effectively and safely.

FIT staff members met with your supervisors and peers to discuss the issues and injuries that are common to your job. This program focuses on the muscles that are commonly tight on all of us, and muscles that you need to work properly during your shift. Warming up has also been shown to make you feel better and more alert.

## *Is a Warm Up the Same as Stretching?*

No. Stretching tries to increase the length of a muscle by holding it in a longer position for 20-30 seconds. This program is not stretching, but instead is designed to “warm up” the muscles.

Specifically, the Warm Up allows the temperature of the muscles to increase, the muscles to get ready for movement, and gets the brain communicating with the muscles.

Stretching, as described above, actually does the opposite; it relaxes the muscles, decreases blood travelling to the muscles, and tells the brain that communication is not needed to the muscle...since it is relaxing. Although stretching is really good after activity, the Warm Up is preferred before activity or the work shift.

## *FIT START Movements*

FIT START is not exercise, rather is 5 simple movements used to meet the needs of a warm up as described above. **NOTE:** Perform the movements to the best of your ability, and do not force yourself to do the full movement if you cannot do it. You will get better over time. The important thing is that you are moving. Stand tall and think about keeping good posture. Move slowly.

# S

## Swing the Arms :: 20 SWINGS



### A

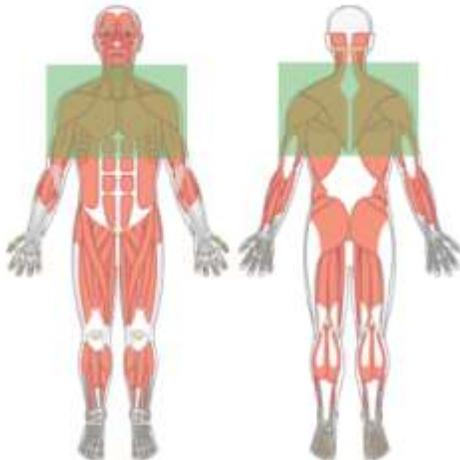


### B

### Description:

- Stand up straight. Feet as wide as hips.
- Arms straight out to the side. Level with shoulders.
- Slowly Swing the arms backwards in large circle motion.
- Squeeze shoulder blades together as you circle your arms back.

### Muscles Worked:



This warm-up focuses on your upper body. Specifically, it will work the muscles that help you with your posture and standing up tall & straight.

# T

## Twist the Body :: 20 TWISTS



**A**

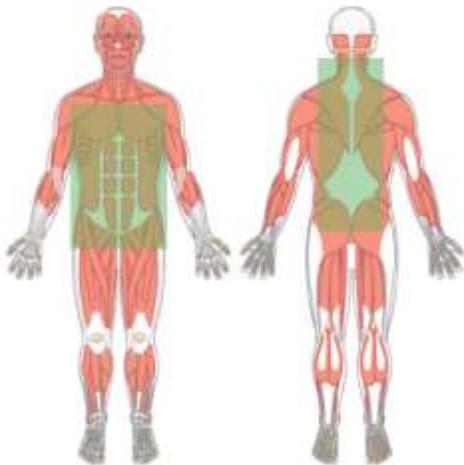


**B**

### Description:

- Stand up straight. Feet wider than shoulders.
- Arms straight out to the side. Level with shoulders. Palms down.
- Slowly **Twist** your upper body left and right.
- Keep arms out straight.

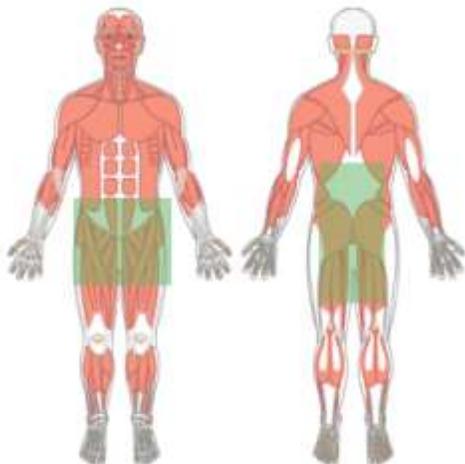
### Muscles Worked:



This warm-up focuses on your upper body and your back. Specifically, it will work the muscles that will allow you to twist and move your spine safely.

**A****Alternate & Sink :: 10 SINKS****A****B****Description:**

- **Alternate** your feet with one foot in front of the other. Use wall for support.
- Feet should be 2-3 feet apart.
- Bend both knees, **Sink** your body straight toward ground.
- Switch legs & Repeat.

**Muscles Worked:**

This warm-up focuses on the front and back of your legs. Specifically, it works the muscles that remain unused and tight from many hours of sitting.

# R

## Reach & Fold :: 10 REACHES



### A

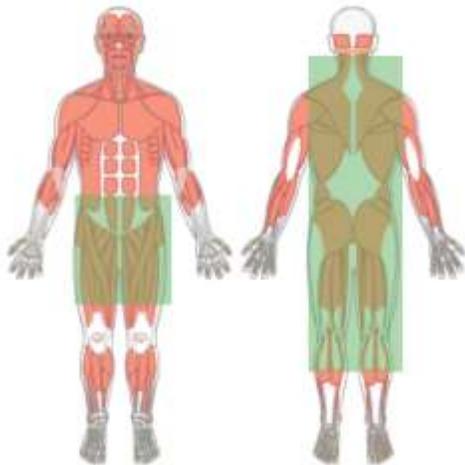


### B

### Description:

- Stand up straight. Feet as wide as hips.
- **Reach** your arms straight above your head.
- **Fold** forward at the hips keeping legs straight.
- Keep your back straight.

### Muscles Worked:



This warm-up focuses on your legs and your back. Specifically, it will work the muscles that you will be using to bend and lift objects during your shift.

# T

## Touch & Toss :: 10 TOSSES



### A

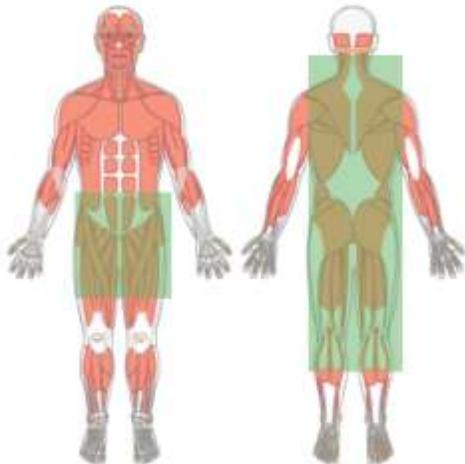


### B

### Description:

- Stand up straight. Feet as wide as hips.
- Squat and **Touch** your knees with your hands.
- Stand and **Toss** your arms upward as if you were tossing a ball into the air.
- Keep your back straight

### Muscles Worked:



This warm-up focuses on your legs and your back. Specifically, it will work the muscles that you will be using to bend and lift objects during your shift.



## Nutrition for a Healthy Lifestyle

### The Food Guide Pyramid:

1. **Grains:** Bread, pasta, tortillas, crackers, rice and cereal.
  - a. Strive for 35!! Trying to eat 35 grams of fiber per day can help keep your weight down and your heart healthy!
  - b. Try to select at least ½ of your grains from WHOLE GRAIN sources.
2. **Vegetables:** Broccoli, lettuce, greens, peppers, onions, etc.
  - a. Prepare by either steaming or boiling.
  - b. Choose fresh or frozen, avoid canned if possible.
3. **Fruits:** Berries, melons, oranges, bananas, apples, etc.
  - a. The more colorful, the better!
  - b. Eat fresh fruit over juice for more fiber and less calories.
4. **Dairy:** Milk, cheese, and yogurt.
  - a. Try to get at least 3 servings of a low-fat or fat-free dairy each day to help with weight maintenance and promote healthy bones!
  - b. 1 serving= an 8oz glass of milk, a 1 oz slice of cheese, or a 4-6oz yogurt.
5. **Meat and Beans:** Beef, chicken, turkey, pork, fish, shrimp, eggs, and all types of beans.
  - a. Try to avoid unhealthy fats by choosing lean cuts of meat such as skinless chicken and turkey breast, beef sirloin or ground beef with less than 10% fat, seafood, and eggwhites.
  - b. Beans are high in fiber and nutrients, however should be prepared without fats such as lard or pork fat.

### FIT's Top FIVE:

1. **Don't drink your calories!** Most sodas, juices, and energy drinks are really high in sugar and calories. Try to select skim milk or water when choosing a beverage. If you do not like water (or just need that soda fix), try selecting calorie free flavored beverages such as diet soda or flavored sparkling waters.
2. **Shop the perimeter of the grocery store.** The outer ring of the grocery store tends to be where you will find the most "whole" foods; i.e. fruits, vegetables, cheese, milk, eggs, and meats. The inner aisles have a tendency of sucking you in to purchase highly processed, calorie-dense foods. If you must brave these aisles, take a list and stick to what is on it. This will not only help keep you healthy, it can help save you money, too.
3. **Do NOT skip meals.** Your body needs energy all day long. When you skip a meal, your metabolism perceives that you are starving and slows down. This means you retain more fat in the moment and store more fat the next time you eat. Keeping nutritious snacks around that are quick and easy can help make sure you are feeding your metabolism every 3-4 hours. Nutritious snacks include: Granola bars with less than 10 grams of sugar, 5-10 almonds, string cheese, raw fruits and vegetables, light popcorn, and turkey jerky.
4. **AVOID DEEP FRIED FOODS!** Deep fried foods are loaded with calories and unhealthy fats. Try baking some of your favorite deep fried snacks. For example, home baked French fries have half the calories and 1/3 of the fat of deep fried French fries.
5. **Move after you eat.** Even if it just a 10 minute walk or a 10-15 squats, movement after eating can help manage your blood sugars, improve digestion, and burn some calories.



## Being More Active

If you would like to be more active outside of your work shift, consider [FIT's Top 8 Tips](#):

**1. Limit how much time you sit.**

You can burn an extra 200-300 calories just by walking around for 1 hour each day, instead of sitting. Great health improvements can be seen in people that can get 150 minutes per week of moderate activity, such as walking at 2.5 miles per hour or gardening.

**2. Set small goals.**

Set a goal to be active for today and tomorrow. Then tomorrow, set a goal for the next day. Take it day to day or week to week.

**3. Start small.**

In the beginning, make time to be active for 10 minutes. You can add time as you start making activity more of a habit. Also, start with setting time aside to be active 1 day per week, then after a few weeks go to 2-3 days per week.

**4. Find activities you like.**

Find activities that you like, as it will be much easier to do them. Go for a nice hike, walk the dog, play tennis, start a garden, play horseshoes, or go for a bike ride.

**5. Find a workout buddy or group.**

Having someone to be active with can help keep you accountable, and make the activity more fun.

**6. Monitor your progress.**

Write down your activity and how many minutes you go for, or use a pedometer to track the number of steps you get each day. (*Hint:* The goal is 10,000 steps per day). Think about your goals and how all the little things you do day to day impact these goals.

**7. Plan for being active.**

Physical activity does not typically just happen, so we must make plans to be active. Also, by scheduling your time to be active, you may be more motivated to do it and less likely to forget about it.

**8. Alter you Environment.**

How easy is it for you to be active or eat healthy at home? A great first step is to set up your home environment so that it is easy to eat healthy and easy to be active. For example, trying to eat healthy when you are surrounded by junk food is difficult.

If you need help with increasing your physical activity or healthy eating, please contact [The Fitness Institute of Texas](#).

**Phone:** (512) 471-0081

**Fax:** (512) 471-0946

**Email:** [fit@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:fit@austin.utexas.edu)

**Web:** [www.edb.utexas.edu/fit](http://www.edb.utexas.edu/fit)