

5 MINUTES TO A PAIN FREE PRACTICE

By Steve Satin

The majority of dentists and auxiliaries working in the dental field experience some type of physical discomfort or injury. Research shows 82.7% of dentists reported at least one symptom of musculoskeletal disease in the past 12 months (*Baltic Dental and Maxillofacial Journal, 2007 Volume 9, Number 1*). The dental field is a high risk profession. Whether you have issues with your neck, shoulders, middle back, lower back, elbows, forearms, wrists, or fingers, taking charge now can change your day-to-day well being.

Most dental professionals either try to bear the pain, make minor adjustments, or simply accept this is a job hazard. Are you wondering:

Is there a simple solution?

Is it the chairs I sit on?

Is it the instruments I use everyday?

Could it be the angle of the light on the dental pole?

In fact, it is not any of these single issues. The root cause is the overuse of muscles and tendons you use every day while working – and not the equipment. Just like any other endeavor, the stronger and healthier you are the easier your task becomes. Did you ever think there would be a need to develop an exercise program exclusively for auxiliaries? Whatever program you consider must be specific to your needs and the reality of the demands to your body.

Our clients who practice dentistry have said to us many times: "I want to make sure my practice does not debilitate me as it has so many others I know." Fifteen years ago when a dentist and client of Satin Wellness was diagnosed with spinal stenosis, we were asked by him and his orthopedic surgeon to develop an exercise program specifically to alleviate his pain. The combination of his back condition and the requirement on his body as a dentist caused us to step back and design a highly customized program. Because of such positive results the dentist asked us to expand the program to include his auxiliaries who were having similar complaints. Through this experience we developed a proven system for dentists and auxiliaries to alleviate and prevent pain.

As a dental auxiliary you have two major challenges – postural issues and repetitive motion injuries. As a short reminder let's think of your body posture at work and the repetitive nature of the profession:

Neck flexion – consistent forward head bend and rotation

Shoulder blade protraction – rounding of your shoulders

Shoulder rotation – repetitive shoulder rotation

Trunk flexion and rotation – reoccurring bending forward and turning

Elbow/wrist/finger flexion and extension – repetitive elbow, wrist, and finger flexion and extension

Strength and flexibility are the two keys to proper posture and strong bones. Since muscles attach to bones by way of tendons, the stronger and more flexible the attachment the easier it is for muscles and bones to move.

5 IN 5

We developed five exercises to address each of the five areas that affect those in the dental profession. "5 in 5" are five simple exercises and they can help reverse the physical toll caused by repetitive motion as well as postural injuries. They are designed to be completed in just five minutes.



1 NECK Head Neck Retraction:

This strengthening movement relieves neck and shoulder soreness

- Sit with back against a chair and head against wall
- Gently retract your head and neck against wall
- Push neck in toward wall 5 times



2 SHOULDERS Shoulder Blade Retraction:

This strengthening movement alleviates upper and middle back tightness/soreness

- Wrap theraband around middle of dental light pole
- Stand facing in toward light pole and bend knees
- Wrap band around each hand
- Pull elbows back behind you
- Pinch shoulder blades together and then pinch harder
- Complete 5 repetitions

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3 LOWER BACK Posture Seated Pelvic Tilt:

This flexibility exercise stretches the muscles in the neck, shoulder, middle and lower back and alleviates soreness in the same areas

- Sit with chair against a wall
- Gently retract head, neck, shoulders against a wall
- Flatten lower back against the chair
- Hold in abdominal area tightly
- Feel stretch in back of neck



4 ABDOMINALS & SIDE MUSCLES Seated Side Stretch:

This flexibility exercise stretches the muscles on the side of the body and strengthens the opposite side

- Sit with perfect posture
- Retract head against wall
- Reach right arm up to ceiling
- Lean upper body over to left
- Feel stretch on right side
- Hold for 30 seconds
- SWITCH SIDES



5 ELBOWS, FOREARMS, WRISTS, HANDS & FINGERS Seated Back of Hand/Forearm Stretch:

This flexibility exercise stretches the muscles in the forearm and back of hand discomfort.

- Sit with perfect posture in a chair
- Bring right arm straight out in front of you with fingers facing down
- Put left hand on back of right hand
- Pull right fingers in toward you using left hand
- Feel stretch in right forearm and back of right hand
- Hold for 30 seconds
- SWITCH HANDS



Steve Satin, Exercise Physiologist, is the founder and owner of Satin Wellness. A speaker for the past 10 years, he has spoken to organizations such as Yankee Dental Conference, Tufts Dental School, Joslin Diabetes Center, University of Massachusetts, and Diabetes Exercise Sports Association. He is a member of the IDEA and a past member of the Massachusetts Governors Committee on Physical Fitness and Sports. For

For more information, visit satinwellness.com