



**PAIN**

# Five minutes to a pain-free practice

By Steve Satin

For more on this topic, go to [www.dentaleconomics.com](http://www.dentaleconomics.com) and search using the following key words: *pain-free practice, Satin Wellness, 5 in 5, Steve Satin.*

The majority of dentists and hygienists working in the dental field experience some type of physical discomfort or injury. Research shows that 82.7% of dental professionals reported at

least one symptom of musculoskeletal disease in the past 12 months. (*Baltic Dental and Maxillofacial Journal*, 2007 Volume 9, Number 1) Whether it's issues with the neck, shoulders, middle back, lower back, elbows, forearms, wrists, or fingers, the dental field is a high-risk profession, and taking charge now can change one's day-to-day well-being.

Most dental professionals try to bear the pain, make minor adjustments, or simply accept that they have a job hazard they must deal with.

### You may be 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 single issue. The root cause is the overuse of muscles and tendons every day while you work, and not the equipment. Who would have thought that 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 hygienists? It's critical that whatever program you consider, it should be specific to your needs and the demands you place on your body.

#### Focus Area:

#### 5 in 5 Exercise:

<b>Neck</b>	Neck retraction (which strengthens your Splenius muscles, Trapezius and Levator Scapulae, and stretches your Sternocleidomastoid and Scalenes) now do five harder neck retractions
<b>Shoulder Blades</b>	Middle Trapezius, Rotator Cuff & Rhomboids. Shoulder blade retraction (the amount you use these muscles in protraction all day. You need to focus on strengthening your Rhomboids and Middle Trapezius and not so much on flexibility). Shoulder blade contraction — five harder shoulder blade pinches
<b>Lower Back</b>	This exercise will help strengthen your <i>erector spinae</i> or lower back muscles. From sitting during your day, your abdominals get too tight and lower back stretches too much. You need to do the opposite. I am sure you have all heard of a pelvic tilt. Well, we do it a little different. I want you to flatten your lower back as hard as you can against the back of your chair or if you are standing against a wall. Now hold your abdominals — now do a harder pelvic tilt seated and standing to contract all of the muscles
<b>Abdominals and side muscles</b>	It is very difficult to stretch the abdominals (front and heading toward the side) and Quadratus Lumborum (side muscles) but you use them all day. Sit with a pelvic tilt and lean over slowly to one side. Hold for 30 seconds and switch. As you stretch one side, you strengthen the other
<b>Elbow, Forearm, Wrists, Hands, and Fingers</b>	The small muscles and tendons that end in your mid-forearm need to be more flexible to assist your fingers, hands, and wrists in moving with those small repetitive movements. All you need to do are these stretches to reduce soreness in your elbows, hands, wrists, and fingers

## Five minutes to a pain-free practice

Five exercises done correctly will help you isolate and strengthen these specific muscles so you can feel better and practice long-term without discomfort!



### HEAD/NECK RETRACTION© Satin Wellness, Inc.

This strengthening movement relieves neck and shoulder soreness

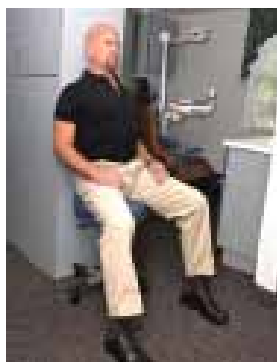
- Sit with back against a chair and head against wall
- Gently retract your head and neck against wall
- Push neck in toward wall five times



### SHOULDER BLADE RETRACTION

This strengthening movement alleviates upper and middle back pain

- Wrap thera-band 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 five repetitions

### LOWER BACK/POSTURE SEATED PELVIC TILT©, Satin Wellness

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, and shoulders against the wall
- Flatten lower back against the chair
- Hold in abdominal area tightly
- Feel stretch in back of neck, shoulders, and lower back
- Hold for 30 seconds



### ABDOMINALS AND 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



### ELBOWS, FOREARMS, WRIST, HANDS, AND FINGERS

#### BACK OF HAND/FOREARM STRETCH

This flexibility exercise stretches the muscles in the forearm and addresses 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

## Proven track record

Our clients who practice dentistry have said many times, “I want to make sure my practice does not debilitate me as it has so many others I know.”

Fifteen years ago, a dentist who was a client of Satin Wellness was diagnosed with spinal stenosis. He and his orthopedic surgeon asked us to develop an exercise program specifically for him to alleviate his pain. The combination of his back condition and the requirements on his body as a dentist caused us to step back and design a highly customized program. Because of his positive results, the dentist asked us to expand the program to include his hygienists, who had similar complaints.

Through this experience we developed a proven system for dentists and hygienists to alleviate and prevent pain.

As a dental hygienist, you have two major challenges — postural issues and repetitive motion injuries. As a quick 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 forward bending and turning
- ◆ Elbow/wrist/finger flexion and extension — repetitive elbow, wrist, and finger flexion and extension

You may not know that 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 the muscles and bones move.

We developed five exercises to address each of the five areas that affect those in the dental profession. They can be done in five minutes. “5 in 5” is five simple exercises that can help reverse the physical toll the practice of dentistry can cause due to repetitive motion, as well as postural injuries. Knowing the time challenges of most professionals today, these exercises are designed to be completed in just five minutes. See the photos and descriptions on the left.

## DE

Steve Satin, exercise physiologist, is the founder and owner of Satin Wellness. Steve speaks to help dental professionals develop proper habits. For more information on “5 in 5,” go to [www.satinwellness.com](http://www.satinwellness.com). You may reach Steve at [ssatin@satinwellness.com](mailto:ssatin@satinwellness.com).

