



Ergonomics and Exercise at Work

Human bodies are not designed to sit all day; we are made to move! Unfortunately, prolonged sitting is a common issue in the working world that can contribute to a variety of health problems. Incorporating just five to ten minutes of exercise throughout your workday can significantly reduce health risks generally associated with a sedentary lifestyle. Additionally, the way you sit at your desk and the ergonomics of your office space are equally important to your health. So, what better way to celebrate Employee Health and Fitness Month than practicing healthy office habits?

Office Ergonomics

Do you have chronic aches and pains? This may be a consequence of how you sit at work. Since a typical day at work may require eight or more hours, focusing on how you sit at your desk is very important. Adjusting your workspace can increase productivity and diminish back pain as well as muscle tension in the neck and shoulders.

Posture

Slouching does not allow the natural curve of the back to be in the correct position, which can lead to muscle fatigue and injury. Try centering your body in front of your monitor and keyboard. Sit up straight, keep thighs horizontal with your knees around the same

level as your hips. Keep your forearms level or tilted up slightly.

Position

The position of your wrist while using the computer and the spacing of objects around your desk may also have an impact on your mood and body. When typing, remember to keep your wrist straight, instead of stiff or bent to either side, to lower the risk of repetitive stress injuries (RSI). Not having objects close to your reach, such as your mouse, may also increase RSI. Office materials should be within reach to prevent unwanted stretching. If you cannot reach an object, do not attempt to go over your limit, stand up to retrieve what you need instead.

Check out the Mayo Clinic's Office Ergonomics Guide: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/office-ergonomics/MY01460>

Get Moving at Work

Headset:

If you talk on the phone frequently while typing, consider investing in a headset. Cradling your phone and typing at the same time can cause neck and back discomfort over time. Using a headset will prevent this discomfort and create a healthier neck and spine.

Office Movements

Activity in the workplace is another crucial element of a healthy lifestyle at work. Toni Yancey, MD, MPH, and professor in the health services department believes, "If there is a fountain of youth, it is probably physical activity." Dr. James Levine, a researcher from Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, goes as far to say that sitting is a "lethal activity." Researchers are beginning to believe that even following the national recommendation of exercising 30 minutes per day at least 5 days per week may not be enough to counter the effects of sitting for eight or more hours per day. Increased sitting and less movement is making us sick. Get moving and try out these tips to improve your health at work:

- Add extra steps whenever possible. Park farther away, always take the stairs, and try taking small five minute breaks every hour.
- While sitting in your chair, lift one leg off the seat, extend it out straight, hold for two seconds,

then lower your foot (stop short of the floor) and hold for several seconds. Switch. Do each leg 15 times.

- Replace your classic desk chair with an exercise or stability ball. This will help strengthen your core and create more balance and flexibility.
- Sit facing forward, turn your head to the left and your torso to the right, and hold a few seconds. Repeat 15 times alternating sides.
- Sitting up straight, try to touch your shoulder blades together. Hold, and then relax.
- Move your printer further away from your desk so you have to get up and walk to retrieve your papers.
- Forget emailing your coworker. Get up and say hello!



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