Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Staying Healthy on the Job: Tips for Maintaining Physical Health at Work

The statistics say it all: we are spending more and more time at work. Unfortunately, with a heavier workload, increases in injury and illness can sometimes follow. Being unwell not only impacts your / efficiently and productively you work.



Below are some suggestions to help you stay fit and healthy on the job:

Your workspace needs to fit YOU. Most people spend everyday in front of a computer, talking on the phone or using machinery and these repetitive motions can take a strenuous toll on you body. Ergonomics ensure that the design and arrangement of your work station allows for safe use. Setting up your workspace properly will limit headaches, eyestrain, back and neck pain and can prevent chronic conditions including carpal tunnel syndrome—a painful nerve disorder of the wrist and hand.

If you mostly work at a desk you should:

- Use an adjustable chair to customize the height, back and arm rests to your body. Your feet should rest comfortably on the ground and your thighs should be parallel to the floor. Items that you frequently use must be within arms reach to prevent bending and twisting.
- Your keyboard and mouse should be just below elbow level and close to the body. Keyboard trays can help and will keep your wrists straight.
- Ensure your computer monitor is at least one arm's length away from you. The top of the screen should be at eye level, and the monitor should sit directly in front of you.

If you spend most of your work day standing or on the move, consider the following:

Ergonomics are important to all work-related tasks. Consider how you access regularly used tools or machinery and be sure to eliminate movement from the waist. Vary your postures, alternate repetitive tasks and practice safe lifting procedures—don't lift a weight you can't handle, ensure you bend your knees to put the weight on your legs rather than your back.

Make stretching a regular part of your work routine. Muscular tension and pain caused by repetitive work activities is very common. Try these simple exercises right at your workstation to relax your muscles and energize your spirit. Do these stretches often throughout the day to prevent injury, not only when you are tired and stiff.

- **Head tilt.** Place your right hand on your left shoulder and slowly bring your ear towards your right shoulder without turning your head. Hold this for five seconds and then switch sides.
- **Neck rolls.** Slowly roll your head to the right, down to the centre and over to the left. Repeat in the opposite direction.

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- **Shoulder circles.** Sit up straight and slowly roll your shoulders forward ten times and back ten times.

- **Side stretch.** Reach your arms out to the side and then clasp your hands above your head. Lean your upper body to the right side. Hold for five seconds and then switch sides.

- **Back curl.** Hold your right shin and lift your leg off the floor. Bend forward and curl your back reaching your nose to your knee. Repeat on the other side. This exercise will also stretch your legs.

Make healthy eating choices. Often unhealthy foods are easily accessible in the workplace and when you're hungry it's hard to avoid them. Combat mid-work slump with healthy snacks including: yogurt, fruit, vegetables and nuts. Never skip breakfast—it fuels your mind and your metabolism.

Start moving. Sitting at a desk or completing repetitive tasks can be mentally and physically draining. Take every chance to move around at work and be sure to change positions at least every 30 minutes if possible. Get away from the workplace—take a lunchtime walk, choose to take the stairs and if driving pull over and take in a view. Just by getting up and moving around, you will feel less tired and more focused.

Keep your work area clean. Although it's your own space, germs and bacteria live all over your work area. Regularly disinfect your workstation to reduce your chances of becoming ill.

Wash your hands regularly. Good hand hygiene, when done properly, is your best defense against illness. Wash your hands throughout the day and keep a bottle of hand sanitizer with you if you can't get to a sink. Try to keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.

Get a good night's sleep. Catching up on your zzz's not only boosts your immune system but also improves your memory, concentration and reaction time. Limit your caffeine consumption while at work to improve the quality of your sleep.

Most people spend one third of their day or half their waking hours at work, so it's vital to make healthy lifestyle choices at home *and* on the job. Small changes to your routine and a little proactive planning will not only help you stay healthy, but function better personally and professionally.