

# Lifestyle Tips



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## Workplace Physical Activity

It's the Information Age, and the nature of work and our lifestyles have changed. Most of us have traded our oxen and ploughs for keyboards and headsets—and our bodies have noticed! Generally, we work in less-active roles, with long periods sitting in front of computers or on the phone. Plus, many parents work outside the home, which means more hours on the highway or in meetings, and less family leisure time during the work week. All this stacks up to an inactive lifestyle.

Recent research found that 42% of Canadian workers report “lack of time due to work” as a barrier to physical activity. We may not be getting up with the roosters at dawn, but we still only have 24 hours in a day. So, instead of letting exercise fall off the bottom of your lengthy to-do list, how about incorporating some physical activity into your work day? Being physically active at work is a great way to help you get the 60 minutes of daily physical activity recommended by Canada's Physical Activity Guide. And remember—you don't have to do it all at once. Try adding 10 minutes of activity at a time, and you'll be surprised at how fast it'll add up to 60 minutes.

Here are some great ways for you to put some “workout” into your workday!

- Take a break. Coffee and lunch breaks offer a great chance to get outside and go for a brisk walk. The fresh air will do you good.

- Step into it. Taking the stairs is a great habit to get into. A study at a Geneva hospital asked 77 physicians and nurses with sedentary lifestyles to use only the stairs at work for three months. The payoff from the 3-month intervention was significant reductions in waist circumference, body weight, fat mass, diastolic blood pressure, and LDL cholesterol. You can make a big change in your health, one step at a time!
- Walk and talk. You don't need to be sitting to have a productive conversation. Conduct a walking meeting and you may find that the ideas get pumping along with your heart.
- Build team spirit. Enter a corporate team in a local league or community sporting event. It's a great way to blow off some steam, get some exercise and get to know your coworkers.

- Active commuting. Walk or ride your bike to work. If you live too far away, consider driving partway and walking the rest. Or, get off the bus two or three stops early.

Active employees do their own bodies good—and their employers will benefit, too. If your company doesn't already promote employee physical activity, you may want to encourage them to think about it! There are many good reasons for an employer to consider workplace physical activity and health promotion programs:

- Increased productivity
- Reduced turnover
- Improved work quality
- Improved job satisfaction
- Improved employee morale
- Reduced sick leave
- Increased ability to handle job stress
- Decreased conflicts at work
- Greater job satisfaction
- Improved employee health and fitness

Even without a formal workplace program, there are many ways an organization can encourage its staff to get more active:

- Provide facilities that support physical activity, such as bike racks, showers, change facilities, and access to stairwells.
- Implement policies that allow time for physical activity and recognize participation on teams, corporate charity walks or other programs.
- Offer access to space or company facilities for the purposes of getting active—like yoga classes in the boardroom or walking clubs on company property

Workplace physical activity is a joint responsibility between the employer and the employee. By working together to promote physical activity, everyone benefits.

