

Lifestyle Tips



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Getting Active at Work



One hundred and fifty years ago, when most Canadians went to work, their jobs were physically demanding. As we entered the modern era, the workplace in Canada changed

dramatically to one of largely sedentary assignments. In fact, approximately 70% of Canadian adults spend their waking hours engaged in sedentary behaviors¹. Does this sound familiar? Sit in the car on the way to work. Sit at a desk all day. Sit in the car on the way home. Collapse on the couch after dinner.

Yet we know that physical activity has been recognized as the most significant factor in helping to reduce obesity and other chronic health conditions among Canadians². However, only 15% of the Canadian adults engage in the recommended amount of daily physical activity. Considering that so many of us



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spend more than 8 hours a day at work, it is not surprising that sedentary behaviors while at work have been linked to issues among employees such as absenteeism, disability, several chronic illnesses and poor productivity³. Employers are recognizing the toll that poor health and physical inactivity is taking on their workforce and many are supporting workplace wellness programs for their employees. So how can we improve our health while at work? Follow these tips to get active and healthy while on the clock!

1. Find an active way to commute to work. You can walk, cycle, jog, or rollerblade to work and get a great workout for your heart and lungs, as well as your legs and core muscles.
2. Park the car further from work. It may not seem like much, but parking an extra 5-7 minutes away from the doors can increase your daily activity by 10-15 minutes. Consider that if you do that several times a day, at the mall or at the grocery store, you will have accumulated an extra 30 minutes of light activity per day.
3. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Stair climbing has been recognized as a great aerobic workout and helps to build the muscles in the legs and your core. Get even more cardiovascular and strength benefits by skipping a step as you walk up the stairs.
4. Get up and move around every 60-90 minutes and add stretch breaks. Instead of calling or emailing a colleague, walk over to talk to them; walk to the farthest washroom on the floor; or just go for a 5 minute "walk break". Simple desk exercises such as a head and shoulder rolls, back and chest stretches, and wrist and ankle rotations will increase blood circulation and improve your overall flexibility.
5. Go for a walk after lunch or join a fitness class. A 20-30 minute walk after your lunch will help to clear your mind, improve the



- metabolism of your lunch, and increase your daily activity. Joining a lunchtime fitness class or a walking club with your colleagues can be a great way to increase physical activity levels, meet new friends, and stay on track with your health plan.
6. Think about your posture and get fit at your desk. You can build your core and back muscles by simply sitting tall and maintaining good posture throughout the day. If you want to get even stronger, swap your desk chair for an exercise ball to strengthen more muscles throughout the body.
 7. Support physical activity and wellness activities at work by attending events, getting others to join, and give your employer feedback on their success. It takes time and effort to successfully implement wellness programs at work.
 8. Join work-sponsored sports groups and leagues. Participating on a sports team is a great way

to increase physical activity, have fun, and enhance team building. Organize or join a sports team with your colleagues to support wellness initiatives at your workplace.

References

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- ³ Anderson et al. (2009). The effectiveness of worksite nutrition and physical activity interventions for controlling employee overweight and obesity. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. Vol. 37(4):340-356.