



Keeping Fit in the Office:

Treat your mind and body in 7 steps

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Well folks, although it may be sad to say, summer is officially over. The days are getting shorter, the air is getting cooler, and patio season is coming to an end. As the mercury drops and the heat from the sun's rays elude us, many of us become less inclined to spend lunch outside or walk those 20 minutes instead of driving. With outdoor activities dwindling, it's easy to settle into fall/winter hibernation mode and seek warm solace in our office buildings. As tempting as this can be, it's important to keep active throughout the colder seasons to avoid the winter blues, also known as SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder).

A great way to keep a healthy, positive attitude and mind is through exercise. Neurotransmitters released during physical activity have been known to alleviate pain (both mental and physical), treat depression, and improve memory. All good things!

Here are seven things to do to keep happy, healthy, and active at the office during those awkward weeks between summer fun and winter activities:



1 Schedule Breaks:

The first step in your office fitness regime is to remind yourself to actually do it! If you can remember to stop every hour to give a little stretch, then you're already doing better than most of us. For everyone else who needs a little reminder, check out www.fitness-break.com. This site offers a free downloadable program for your computer's desktop that pops up when it's time to take a break. On these breaks you can do any number of activities (see below) or you can scroll through the ideas suggestion in the program. Plus side: there are no audible alarms so your co-workers never get irritated.

2 Having A Ball:

Trading out your tired desk chair for a brightly coloured exercise ball is a great way to add a little fun into your work day. Using an exercise ball instead of a desk chair forces your legs, back, and abdomen to work double time to keep you up right and seated — this is known as "active sitting." If you have a history of lower back problems you might want to try a Fit-Disc instead, which offers the same benefits as a ball but without the pressure on your back. Of course, if any back (or other) pain occurs, this flashy fitness statement may not be for you. Bonus: the ball can also be used for other exercises if you're lucky enough to have a private space in your office.



3 Kicking Butt:

Stretching is one of the best ways to feel rejuvenated during the workday. Why not stretch your leg muscles and kick your own butt into gear at the same time? Next time you take the walk from your desk to the Xerox machine try touching your toes to your butt with each step, alternating feet as you go. This is an effective way to stretch your quadriceps and engage your calf muscles, while looking totally normal and not at all strange in front of your co-workers. Other simple stretches you can do include: head/neck tilts, flexing and pointing ankles/feet, squeezing and releasing shoulders, and a good old fashioned shoulder roll.



4 Chair Lifts:

If you work in an open office and are looking for a more subtle way of getting in a little fitness, try chair lifts. Placing your hands on the arms of your chair, lift yourself off the seat, maintaining a 90-degree leg position, and hang there for a few seconds. Do this several times to work your arms, abs, and quads. This can also provide a much needed butt-off-seat break.

5 Go For A Stroll:

Sometimes the best thing to do to get that well needed break from your desk is to simply take a lap. When you start to feel tired or unproductive, or even if you've just been sitting in the same position for a significant amount of time, stand up and walk a lap or two around your office. This is especially great if you work in a cubicle or small area. Get up and stretch your legs with a jaunt to the bathroom and back, or down to your favourite co-worker. If the mood permits, start a conga line and get everyone else moving, too!



6 Take The Stairs:

It may seem obvious but choosing to take the stairs instead of the elevators is a simple way to increase activity during your otherwise sedentary work day. Benefits to taking the stairs include a nice butt, rock hard thighs, sculpted calves, and bragging rights. Plus, who's ever heard of a staircase breaking down in between floors? Added bonus: you'll never again be crammed up against the guy who apparently ate an entire bulb of garlic for breakfast.

7 Drink Water:

Just like that sad looking office fern, your body craves water. In fact, you're probably dehydrated right now. Symptoms of dehydration include: fatigue, moodiness, feeling drained, and shockingly, being thirsty! Looking at your daily recommended water intake can feel daunting (usually 6-8 cups of water on average) so break up your day to make consumption easier. Drink one cup during your commute, drink another cup before lunch, and so on. Refilling your cup or water bottle is also a great excuse to leave your chair and walk around a bit. Combine a water-run with some of your other exercises for maximum efficiency. Remember, coffee, tea, and juices do not count towards your recommended water intake. ☺



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