Improve your health at work

*Back at work for 2019? Follow these tips to stay healthy
and be more productive both in and out the office*

Reassess your daily habits

On average, you spend about one third of your life at work. That is why it so important to look at your daily (health) habits… and see how you can improve them. The new year is all about implementing good habits into your life, so here are some easy things to incorporate into your day (even over the weekends) to keep your health as a top priority.

Get moving

Regardless of whether you exercise often or not, make a point of looking at other ways to include physical exercise into your day. Start small. Park further away. Take the stairs. Walk over to colleagues to chat about a project, instead of sending a long-winded email. Utilise your lunch hour more efficiently to exercise properly or walk to lunch. The good news is that just 15 minutes a day of 'light' exercise can improve your health and longevity.

Stretch after every hour

Sitting is the new smoking, as an increasing number of people complain about lower back pain, high blood pressure, diabetes and weight gain, due to a sedentary lifestyle. But just two-minute breaks, where you stand up and walk around, can offset the detrimental hazards of sitting. On the hour, stand up and do a simple stretch; even better, walk around the office a bit, if you can. Make things easier by setting a reminder on your phone and watch your productivity increase afterwards.

Avoid eyestrain

Spending hours behind your computer can cause a host of health problems, but eye strain is probably at the top of this list. It can cause headaches, difficulty focusing and increased sensitivity to light. To help prevent eyestrain, make sure that your computer is placed at arm's length from where you are seated; you should be able to comfortably read what is on your screen at that distance, without having to squint. You can also adjust the brightness on your screen and use eye drops. If you feel overly tired every day, book an appointment with an optometrist to see if you need glasses or an updated prescription on your current glasses.

Sit better

Tension in the neck can occur when the neck and upper shoulders are held in a fixed, awkward position for a long time. This can cause neck and shoulder pain and muscle tightness and tenderness. To avoid this, sit up straight with your shoulders back, with the top of the screen at eye level, and place both feet flat on the floor. If you need to, invest in an ergonomic chair to support your back properly.

Eat mindfully

Fueling your body with the right foods will help you to have a productive and efficient day. Keep healthy snacks – such as fruit and low-fat yoghurt, raw veggies and hummus or popcorn – at your desk to up your energy in between meals. For breakfast and lunch, incorporate brain-boosting foods such as eggs, fatty fish, broccoli and nuts into your (preferably homecooked) meals. From there, step away from your desk and eat elsewhere. Only eat or chat to colleagues, without the distraction of your phone. Eating mindfully will give your brain the break it needs to come back for a power work session after meals.

Increase your water intake

This does not mean having endless cups of tea or coffee throughout the day. If you are constantly tired, chat to your GP about whether you are on the right multivitamin and if you should be taking any other supplements for your body to function at its best. If you struggle to drink enough water, keep a jug of water and a glass on your desk.

Other ways to drink more water:

- Drink a glass of water after every bathroom break
- Add pieces of fresh fruit to your water
- Eat water-rich foods such as melon, cucumber, spinach and lettuce
- Choose sparking or still water over sugary drinks
- Use a marked water bottle to track how much you are drinking

"The most important way to stay healthy at work starts with self-awareness. Know yourself and your limits. Every job is demanding but listen to your body and what it needs. Know when to take breaks and when to go on holiday. Eating well and exercise are small ways to make a big impact on your day-to-day work life."
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