

Getting in shape at the office?

YOU CAN DO IT WITH A LITTLE EFFORT AND DEDICATION, EMPLOYEES, EXPERTS AGREE

BY MICHAEL POWER
Staff Writer

Gail Vallance knows the benefit of making a few lifestyle changes.

The employee at Cybermation in Thornhill has co-ordinated the Weight Watchers at Work program at the software company every Wednesday at lunch.

She and fellow colleagues sometimes go walking and she tries to take the stairs at least part way to her seventh floor office.

She also makes an effort to eat well at the office.

"My top drawer is the snack drawer," she said. "I've got toasted almonds and granola bars in there. Every little bit helps."

By doing that "every little bit" she has lost 18 pounds since October.

The challenges Ms Vallance faces in keeping fit are similar to those faced by office workers everywhere.

As more of us sit behind desks for longer periods of time and with snack machines within close range of many office cubicles, waistlines are at risk of expanding along with the number of hours we're working.

So what's a busy office worker to do?

A good first step is to get up and move once in a while, said Shirley Wheatley, an occupational health nurse at Markham Stouffville Hospital.

"We recommend people take regular breaks at least once an hour," she said.

This can include walking around the office, stretching those hard-typing wrists or just resting a pair of eyes that have been locked on a computer screen all morning, Ms Wheatley said.

"If you're sitting for long, long periods of time it's really important to do that," she noted.

Ms Wheatley encourages employees at the hospital to make sure the monitor, screen, chair and phone they use are positioned comfortably, a practice known as ergonomics.

Whether office equipment fits an employee's size and sitting style makes a difference to overall health, she said.

"If they're in a bad posture it can lead to all kinds of injuries, especially for sedentary workers," she noted.

Weening yourself off junk food gets easier if you bring healthy snacks from home, Ms Wheatley said.

It may even be possible to have healthier snacks put into office



Gail Vallance tries to keep fit at work by taking the stairs at least partway to her seventh-floor office and joining a Weight Watchers at Work program.

vending machines.

(Employees) can talk to whoever is responsible for the food on site and see if they can't get them to provide healthier choices in vending machines," she said.

"You're never going to get rid of the pop and chips, but maybe there's room for another vending machine that has healthier choices."

Eating a proper breakfast will help prevent vending machine temptation, said Lora Nedkov, a sales manager for the Weight Watchers at-work program.

And like Weight Watchers adher-

ent Gail Vallance, Ms Nedkov said she keeps healthy snacks such as cherry tomatoes and bags of carrots on hand during work hours.

"Right by my desk," she said. "I always have something right beside me, so I can avoid the snack machine."

Office workers can also keep a container of water at their desks to keep themselves hydrated and ensure they get the recommended six daily glasses, Ms Nedkov said.

Any exercises or stretching routines that can be done at a desk will help break the daily routine of sitting

still, she added.

"Getting up and moving a bit, or simply pausing to take a breath, can improve how you feel at work," Ms Nedkov said.

"People think if they go away from their desk for five minutes they will miss something, but you need to exercise your brain, too," she said.

"If you really wanted to, I suppose you could put a dumbbell under your desk."

Those interested in Weight Watchers at-work program can call 1-866-ATWORK

HERE'S HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Walk, cycle or inline skate to work;
- replace your coffee break with a walking break;
- organize a lunch hour walking program at your school or office — convince colleagues to start lunch with a quick walk;
- take a fitness class during your lunch break — if you can't find one nearby, start one at work;
- going to a restaurant or running errands at lunch? Shop and dine locally so you can walk to your destination;
- encourage everyone to take a stretch break during meetings;
- suggest a "walk and talk" meeting — set the agenda, then discuss it while you and your colleagues power walk on local pathways;
- accept a fitness challenge — create a team of colleagues and enter a 5-kilometre run and train together before or after work to stay motivated;
- use stairs instead of elevators, stand while talking on the telephone, walk down the hall to speak with someone rather than using the telephone;
- stay at hotels with fitness centres or swimming pools while on business trips;
- work out before or after work to avoid rush hour traffic, or drop by for a noon workout;
- schedule exercise time on your business calendar and treat it as any other important appointment and;
- get off the bus a few blocks early and walk the rest of the way to work or home.

As for nutrition, if your workplace has a microwave oven, you may find frozen foods offer an easy and quick way to get your meal.

But keep in mind some of these suggestions from the American Dietetic Association:

- Look for frozen dinners with less than 15 grams of fat and 800 milligrams of sodium;
- add a salad or vegetable, since frozen meals tend to provide less than one serving of vegetables and;
- add a glass of skim milk or yogurt to increase calcium.

— www.stayinginshape.com,
— www.takeonestep.org

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I'm not responsible for your children.

We've sunk so far into the nanny state syndrome that we've even got Conservatives dumping billions of dollars into child care. With the Tory plan that's \$1,200 for each kid per year, while the loopy Liberals and out-

lunch NDP are screaming for a national subsidized daycare plan. More billions.

The Grits and N-Dippers are even threatening to topple Harper's minority government if they don't get their way. (Sound like spoiled brats throwing a temper tantrum to me)

What has the lefties in a lather...

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