SIMPLE CHANGES THAT MAKE A BIG IMPACT: MOVING MORE

Our society is in the midst of technological advances that enable us to accomplish much more than ever before – without even leaving our desk chairs. Though modern technology has greatly increased efficiency and productivity, our sedentary time has also greatly increased. This has taken a toll on our bodies, physical health and well-being, as we gain more weight, feel worse and increase our risk of developing chronic disease. Moving more on a daily basis is the best way to combat the health risks associated with sitting too long, and it does not have to cost anything at all. Share this information with your employees and help cultivate a work environment where small movements can make a big impact.

Why should we move more?

- Studies have shown that walking at least a mile every day can maintain brain volume and prevent cognitive impairment[i].
- Taking frequent activity breaks helps the heart work more efficiently, trims waistlines, and improves blood pressure and blood fat levels[ii].
- Regardless of age or physical condition, moving more will keep you looking and feeling younger[2].
- Regular movement increases strength, decreases inflammation caused by aging and counteracts muscle breakdown[iii,iv].
- Studding your day with short bouts of low-intensity physical activity has substantial health benefits that rival single vigorous physical activity sessions[v].
- Regular movement improves our physical appearance and body composition. Sitting for prolonged periods of times causes cells to produce 50 percent more fat[vi].
- Moving more helps us live longer, healthier lives. Studies have shown that even among very active groups of people exercising more than seven hours a week, those that spent the most time sitting had a 50 percent greater risk of death from any form of disease[vii].

More movement – it's NEAT!

- Short bouts of low-intensity physical activity such as walking, standing or stretching is referred to as NEAT (non-exercise activity thermogenesis) and was proposed by Dr. James Levine[5]. NEAT is reduces sedentary time by incorporating more movement in our everyday routines, and can burn a significant amount of calories when properly incorporated throughout the day[5].
- We should focus more on reducing chronic sitting time than concentrating on organized exercise.
- Think about how you can slowly add more physical activity, or at least reduce the amount of time you are sitting, every day.
- If you are sitting for long periods of time, try to stand up, walk and stretch at least two to three times every hour[viii].
- A solid target for movement is 10,000 steps a day, or roughly five miles[ix], if you are counting your steps. Consider using a pedometer, physical activity tracker or tracking technology on a smartphone to get a better idea of how many daily steps you are taking. If this seems daunting, start where you are and try to add an additional 1,000 steps per day until you reach your goal.

How to move more during the workday[5]

- Take the stairs when you can instead of elevators or escalators.
- Walk to work or ride a bike if this is an option. Walk as much as you can when running errands and make it a point to avoid drive thru services. Instead, walk into the building to get more steps.
- Park further away to get more steps in before you get to the office.
- Instead of sending an email, get up and walk to your colleague's desk. You might be surprised at how much more quickly you can solve an issue, and how much better you feel moving more.
- Drink more water. This is doubly beneficial, as drinking more water is a healthy habit, and you will need to get up more frequently to head to the bathroom. It's easy to forget to take a stand up and stretch break, but you will remember that you need to use the restroom. Even better, find a bathroom on a different floor and take the stairs to get there.
- Organize walking and standing meetings. You might be shocked at how quickly you will reach conclusions, as your mental processing will improve with physical activity.
- Take walks over lunch or during break times.
- Walk around while talking on the phone.
- Use printers and copiers that are further away to walk some extra steps.
- Consider the option for a standing workstation. If resources are not available to purchase a workstation, you can build one for free out of sturdy boxes.
- Use a stability ball instead of a desk chair to actively work muscle groups while sitting.

Using this information in the workplace:

Low cost or no cost

- Include this information as a monthly topic in wellness-themed publications.
- Make this topic part of a quarterly challenge focused on simple changes that last.
- Tailor this information for a lunch and learn presentation.
- Consider formal or informal policies that encourage employees to move about the workspace as needed. Studies have demonstrated companies that allow their employees time during the workday to exercise are actually more productive than those that do not[x].
- Implement regular standing or walking meetings to reduce sitting time at work. Consider adding some pub tables in meeting spaces to accommodate for comfortable standing postures.
- Map out the walking distances around the hallways in your workplace, and outside if there is a safe space for walking. Share this information with employees and come up with ways to make walking with coworkers a social experience.

Our bodies function best when we can move freely and are not confined to a sitting position. Encourage your employees to move more by giving them the tools in your workplace to make regular physical activity more accessible. Keep in mind that every minute of daily movement counts and adds up to better health and well-being.

Recommended reading:

Eat Move Sleep by Tom Rath | website: www.eatmovesleep.org

For more information on this topic, or suggestions on potential speakers to bring into your organization, contact the Wellness Council of Indiana Helpline at (317) 264-2168. Stay tuned for more *Simple Changes that Make a Big Impact*.

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