

Stay in Shape: Don't let Desk Jobs Do You In

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It's easy to put on weight as we get older, especially when we have a sedentary lifestyle. Look around: more than half of all Americans are overweight, thanks in large part to labor-saving devices, the automobile, desk jobs, computer use, and of course, having access to large portions of tempting foods. Here are some strategies for fitting fitness in, and enjoying a healthy lifestyle despite a sedentary job.



- **Walk or ride a bike to work if possible.** If you use public transportation, get off a few stops early and walk the rest of the way; or, park your car as far as possible from the door. If an errand is a mile or less, try walking or biking the distance.
- **Take exercise breaks instead of coffee breaks.** Take the stairs up and down a few flights or take a short walk outside. Short bursts of activity throughout the day add up to a fitter, trimmer you.
- **Be prepared for fitness.** Keep a pair of sneakers at your desk, along with an umbrella, and an extra sweater or windbreaker, and you'll be ready for an exercise break no matter what the weather.
- **Get up a little earlier in the morning** to fit in a 30 minute brisk walk in your neighborhood. Ask a neighbor, friend, spouse or child to join you. You'll build a firmer body and a stronger relationship.
- **Lift weights.** "Resistance training" is critical for maintaining lean body mass throughout our lives. Employ the services of a certified physical trainer to make sure you are lifting correctly. Because muscle tissue is more metabolically active than fat tissue, the leaner we are, the more calories we burn at rest, or sitting at our desks.
- **Turn off the TV.** There is a direct relationship between hours of television watched and percent of body fat! In other words, the more we watch, the fatter we are.
- **Make your calories count.** If you snack at your desk, choose foods that are low in calories and high in nutrients. Instead of candy and chips, munch on apples and baby carrots. As we get older, and especially if we are physically inactive, we really can't afford to eat foods that deliver a lot of calories but few nutrients. Make sure the majority of the foods you eat are contributing to your health and fitness.
- **Fool yourself.** Of course you can still eat brownies and ice cream. Just serve yourself smaller portions. You'll be satisfied with less if you eat from smaller, but attractive dishes.
- **Choose beverages wisely.** Drink more water, and less soft drinks; keep a water bottle at your desk. Go easy on alcoholic beverages too--they are loaded with calories.
- **Give yourself time.** Schedule regular physical activity into your life just as you would any important meeting. Think of healthy habits as an investment in your life and a contribution to your productive, healthy future.
- **Talk to co-workers and employers** about starting a worksite wellness program with incentives and team-building activities.

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