



Ontario Home Economics Association

Ask a Professional Home Economist

For Immediate Release

Physical Activity in a Tech Savvy Workplace

by Michelle J. Kwan, BFA, BAsC Candidate

While the increased use of technology in the workplace may have significantly boosted office efficiency, it has inadvertently decreased national physical activity levels.

According to the 2007-2009 Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS) completed by Statistics Canada, only 15% of Canadians meet the physical activity guidelines. Based on results of the fitness tests, 'Canadian adults face health risks due to suboptimal fitness levels', the study concluded. Sadly, it appears that the majority of Canadians spend most of their waking hours in sedentary pursuits.

Research suggests that the combination of zero physical activity and high screen time results in the greatest negative impact on health and quality of life. A sedentary lifestyle, which includes sitting, using a computer, and/or watching television for much of the day with little or no vigorous exercise is associated with increased risk of premature death, hypertension, coronary heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology recommends that adults aged 18-64 years accumulate 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more. Moderate physical activity includes brisk walking or bike riding, while more vigorous activities, that cause adults to sweat and be out-of-breath, include jogging or cross-country skiing.

Many Canadians face the on-going challenge of incorporating the recommended physical activity into their daily routine. Small changes can go a long way.

Tips to Help You Get More Physical Activity

- Devote some of your lunch break to exercise. Take a walk, join an aerobics class at the nearby gym, or practice yoga/stretching before eating lunch;
- Ensure your gym bag is fully equipped and put it by your briefcase or in your trunk the night before. Being prepared is one less excuse to skip an exercise routine;

- Walk to a colleague's desk to speak with him instead of relying on the phone, email or texting;
- Take the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator to burn four additional calories per minute. Climbing the stairs for one minute every day can help you lose half a pound in a year;
- Make a conscious effort to get up from your desk to stretch and grab a drink from the water cooler. Making this a habit will keep you hydrated and increase trips to the bathroom to help you avoid sitting too long at one time. Standing at your desk instead of sitting can help too;
- Make technology work in your favour. Apps that track your activity progress can help keep you focused on a plan, while good workout music can be a great motivator;
- Park your car farther than normal from the entrance. If you take public transit, get off 2-3 stops before your destination to benefit from the extra walking;
- Disconnect from the office by turning off a work-related smartphone, tablet, or laptop once you leave. Messages from colleagues and unanswered work emails can distract you from your exercise plan. To stay connected to your fitness goals, leave work where it belongs.

For reliable information, visit The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology: <http://www.csep.ca/>

Michelle J. Kwan is a 4th year Nutrition student at Ryerson University. This article won 1st place in the Ontario Home Economics Association Student Media Release Competition, in March 2013. Soon-to-be a graduate of Ryerson's Nutrition and Food program, the author, a former Miss Universe Canada 2011 delegate and fitness enthusiast, is passionate about sharing credible health information. Follow Michelle on Twitter @NutritionArtist. Kwan is a member of OHEA - a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists that promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life.

OHEA congratulates Michelle and encourages her continued voice on health related issues.

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