

Physical exercise

Our bodies are designed to be active and move.

However due to our modern lifestyles the average person spends 12 hours a day sitting

Why it's important to be fit in a work environment.

Physical activity has physical, physiological & mental benefits.

- Physiological benefits such as a stronger heart and improved immunity mean that you are less likely to catch an 'office cold'
- Physical benefits such as weight loss, increased muscle strength and fewer aches and pains. All of this time spent sitting can leave us feeling tired and achy, as some muscles become overactive and others inactive, ultimately leading to poor posture and paradoxically leaving us wanting to sit down and rest some more!
- Mental benefits. Exercise stimulates chemicals in the brain that leave you feeling happier and more relaxed. This means that you will be less stressed at work & not so likely to burn yourself out.

This is what our amazing brain chemicals do!

- Endorphins – “feel good” chemicals, help to relieve pain & also calm fear & anxiety.
- Serotonin – mood-boosting brain chemical. A happier working day equals cooperation between co-workers

and happier bosses!

- Norepinephrine – helps you become more alert and focused.
- BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor) – promotes the formation of new connections and repairs between nerve cells, which preserves cognitive function as we age.
- Dopamine – “motivation” and “reward” brain chemical. This promotes the desire to achieve something.

Overall, not only does exercise keep you physically and physiologically healthy but it also improves cognitive function, elevates mood, and helps to boost self-esteem and sense of well-being!

What are the clues (silent or obvious) that you or your employee are suffering?

There are many less obvious clues that your employees aren't exercising enough:

- Lots of sick days being taken
- Lack of productivity and motivation
- Employees not engaging or cooperating with colleagues or management
- Lethargy and complaints of not sleeping well

While there may be many other reasons for these symptoms, lack of physical activity will most certainly have an impact on them all and this subject should be discussed and addressed.

Fast acting relief

Most of us have experienced aches and pains in our neck, shoulders and upper back due to sitting down for extended periods of time. To reduce these effects, you don't need to do vigorous exercise but moving and stretching your body at regular intervals throughout the day can help. Not only will moving help prevent your muscles from feeling tired and achy but it will also provide an opportunity to rest your eyes from the glare of the computer screen and will help you relax and refocus your mind.

Long terms solutions

One of the most common reasons for not exercising is lack of time; the reason often being cited for this is ironically our working hours being too long.

Are you really too busy to exercise?

A recent study published in the *American College of Sports Medicine's Health & Fitness Journal* concludes, "A Simple, fast, high-intensity workout – finished in as little as seven minutes – will produce many of the same benefits as a good run and trip to the weight room."

Quality of exercise is more important than the quantity.

Here are our tips for ensuring that you find time to move:

- Put it in your diary! You're less likely to back out.
- Add it into your daily routine
 - Cycle or walk to work and the shops
 - Use part of your lunch break for activity
- Mix friend & family time with activity – go for a walk, play football with your kids or learn an activity together. More enjoyable & helps with motivation!
- Vigorous housework counts if you work up a sweat!
- If you are happy with your exercise technique then try a home workout routine – there are many free workouts available that require no equipment and minimal space. Just make sure that they are from a reputable source.
- If you prefer the atmosphere of working out in a club then look out for those that offer a time efficient fitness solution. Circuit or HIIT style sessions work well for those who are pressed for time.

Who / what can help you?

There are changes that you can make to your routine to ensure that you are active:

- Use the stairs instead of taking the lift
- Get up and speak to your colleague on the next floor rather than phoning or emailing them
- Getting out of the office on your lunch break, even if it is just to go shopping
- Join a gym

This copy was kindly written by Nathalie Le
Mottée, Managing Director of [Healthhaus](#)

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> Wellbeing in the workplace

> Stress

> Resilience

> Time Management

> Healthy Eating

> E-bike Grant Scheme

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