

Jobs, Autos & Classifieds

Sitting is the new smoking

LAST WEEK, WE LOOKED AT HOW WHAT WE EAT AFFECTS HOW WELL WE WORK. THIS WEEK, WE LOOK AT THE OTHER SIDE OF THE EQUATION BY TALKING TO A LOCAL FITNESS EXPERT ABOUT HOW EXERCISE CAN HELP BOOST WORK PERFORMANCE.

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SPECIAL TO
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Recently, I was watching a CNBC interview where the CEO of a pharmaceutical company, who was talking about his employees' job performance, said that he no longer supports the old "butts in the chair equals productivity" adage because, as he put it, "sitting is the new smoking."

By now, we all know just how detrimental smoking is to one's health. So could sitting, something most of us do all day in an office setting, really be the same thing as smoking? When we sit, we are not ingesting carcinogens that can give us lung cancer and kill us. Sitting is one of the three main ways that we position our bodies - standing, lying down and sitting. Was this CEO just trying to make a statement that would work well as a sound bite? And if sitting is the new smoking, what can those of us who sit behind a computer for most of the day do to combat this new health concern?

Why sitting is bad
Before we get into the cures for sitting all day at work, why is it so bad for us?

In a recent interview with Forbes magazine, Tom Rath, author of the New York Times bestselling book, "Eat Move Sleep", said that, "Sitting is the most underrated health-threat of modern time. Researchers found that sitting more than six hours in a day will greatly increase your risk of an early death." Beyond an early grave, sitting for too long, included with other negative things like not eating well and poor sleep habits, affects work performance. "Not reaching your potential is not just about having an illness," said Rath in the Forbes interview. "It's about not being fully healthy. Our culture has spent a lot of time talking about how not to be sick—don't smoke, and don't eat junk food. We also talk a lot about how healthy habits prevent disease. But most people don't talk about how healthy habits improve you—your energy, your focus, your mood, and your performance."

Move it!

We live in a time where technology has forced many of us to sit for too long each day. However, we also live in a time where technology can also help us get moving each

and every day. There are numerous apps available for smartphones and devices like Fitbits and the Apple Watch that can track our daily activity levels and can even give us gentle reminders every couple of hours to get up and get moving. But what are the best ways to stay active in the office? Most of us can't push the desk out of the way and work up a sweat with a 30 minute CrossFit workout in our cubicle. But for Robin F. Thomas, owner of Inursha Fitness, an award winning fitness club located just west of downtown Fort Worth, it's about making exercise a part of our daily routine, wherever we are.

"Studies have found the more hours you spend sitting, the more likely you are to develop diabetes and heart disease and other health conditions. A Swedish study suggest that if you sit all day your telomeres (tiny caps on the end of DNA strands) get shorter. As telomeres get shorter that the body ages at a faster pace," said Thomas. The solution? "Get up and move as much as possible. Take phone calls standing up, take frequent water breaks. Anything that

gets you up from your desk and moving," Thomas said. "Do not sit more than 10 minutes at a time. Get rid of the sodas and drink more water. Walk on your lunch break if you can't hit the gym."

Thomas also gave a few examples of some great exercises to do in an office setting where sweatbands and spandex are not a part of the approved dress code. "Chair squats, wall sits, standing calf raises, walking in place while on the phone, desk pushups and desk dips. These are exercises you can really do every day just to keep the heart rate up," Thomas said. He's also a fan of a few gadgets and apps out on the market that help track our daily fitness levels. "Apps and other gadgets such as the Fitbit and Apple Watch can help you monitor your movement as a pedometer would. A couple apps that are really good are My Fitness Pal and DailyBurn." But you don't have to make an investment in a gadget or keep up with an app to have some accountability in your office fitness routine. Thomas suggests enlisting the help of a co-worker to help keep tabs



on your fitness plan and help inspire you with some friendly competition to see who can reach fitness goals faster. If your company has yet to set up some kind of fitness programming, encourage your human resources representative to do so. "A corporate wellness program can offer incentives and benefits for people who work out and manage their weight," said Thomas.

Finally, if there's simply no way to do wall squats or standing calf raises while you're at work, or no one in your office wants to engage in a fat loss competition where a few bucks and an extra-large cheese pizza goes to the winner, there are other

strategies to help incorporate fitness into our daily routines that will help boost our work performance. "Park as far away from the office as possible and get a good walk into and out of work every day. Do pushups and sit ups as soon as you wake up every morning and hit the gym for a 30 minute lunch workout. At Inursha, we set up our training programs in 30 minutes sessions so busy professionals can get in, have a great workout, get out and get back to the office. These efforts will make the rest your day go by so much better and you will be burning more calories for extended period time after the workout," Thomas said.