

Is your job making you fat?

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Working nine-to-five may be the way to make a living, but it may be padding more than the wallet. According to a new study from the Université de Montréal, office-workers have become less active over the last three decades and this decreased activity may partly explain the rise in obesity. Their findings, published in the early online edition of *Preventive Medicine*, may have health implications for the millions of people toiling behind their desks.

"People eat better and exercise more today than they did in the 1970's, yet [obesity](#) rates continue to rise," says lead author Carl-Étienne Juneau a researcher at the Université de Montréal Department of Social and *Preventive Medicine*. "My hypothesis is that our professional life is linked to this seemingly contradictory phenomenon."

Activity: From the 70's to now

Juneau and his colleagues used several Statistics Canada databases on the health of Canadians that included 17,000 to 132,000 respondents. He concluded that the lack of physical activity during office hours could explain the fact that obesity has increased 10 percent between 1978 and 2004.

A surprise findings was the increased healthy attitudes toward transportation. "As a result of urban sprawl we expected to see more car-dependant people," says Juneau. "Yet, both men and women increasingly adopted healthy behaviours such as walking and biking, which is definitely good news."

Quick bursts of activity may be the solution

Juneau suggests that to combat the inactivity and rise in obesity it would be best to integrate sport, work and transportation. For example, it may be more effective to exercise in smaller doses throughout the day rather than concentrate the effort. Therefore, walking at break time and taking the stairs could have great benefits.

Juneau also believes that the promotion and marketing of exercise can be tweaked. "[Exercise](#) can't just be an individual thing anymore. We must focus on groups. For instance, there are now tax credits for parents who register their child in a recognized physical education course. A similar program could be developed in the workplace for employees."

More information: *Preventive Medicine:*

www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/00917435

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