

AHA: smart ways to get a workout at work

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It's no secret that Americans need to move more. Yet our jobs often require us to sit for eight to 10 hours a day—at home, the office or behind the wheel—often getting up only for lunch and trips to the

bathroom.

And that can be hazardous to your health.

"There's a strong link between a sedentary lifestyle and the risk of death. It also increases the risk of adverse health conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and many types of cancer," said Qaiser Mukhtar, a health scientist in the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity & Obesity at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "That's why [physical activity](#) is so important."

To lower risk of heart attack and stroke, for example, the American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate, or 75 minutes of [vigorous exercise](#), per week.

While that might sound like a lot, it works out to only 30 minutes a day for a five-day [work](#) week.

The good news for office workers who may have difficulty blocking out even a half hour for exercise is, you don't have to get those 30 minutes all at once.

"Bouts of even less than 10 minutes at a time are beneficial," said Dr. Michael V. McConnell, head of Cardiovascular Health Innovations at Verily Life Sciences.

So just in time for Move More Month in April, here are some easy, even fun ways to stay active at work:

- No one ever said meetings had to be held sitting down. Take a walking meeting instead. You'll exercise your heart, get the blood flowing, and may come back to the office with some out-of-the-box ideas.

- Find a walking buddy to join you during your lunch hour or scheduled breaks.
- Face-to-face conversations are often more productive than phone calls, emails or texts. So the next time you want to communicate with a coworker, get up and walk to their desk instead.
- You already walk down three flights of stairs and up two? Good. Now increase your physical activity by using a restroom on another floor or getting off the elevator a floor or two below yours and taking the stairs the rest of the way. And no one says you have to use the copier, printer or waste bin closest to your desk.
- Water cooler talk is fine, but water cooler stretches and squats are even better. Harvard epidemiology professor Kaumudi Joshipura has a whole movement called VMove dedicated to helping people move more anytime, anywhere and without needing any special gear or attire.

For example, don't just sit there while talking on the phone. Stand up and march in place, do squats or swing your arms instead. Take brief breaks to stand and move during long sedentary meetings. Do ankle circles and flexes while sitting or lift your legs and hold them up for five seconds. And don't forget your wrists, arms and neck. They also need to be stretched after long hours at the keyboard.

Consider taking public transportation to work. You'll probably have to walk farther going to and from the bus or subway stop then to your parked car. And you may save money, too.

Healthier workers are more productive, take fewer sick days and have lower health care costs. So join your company's employee wellness committee (or start one if you have to) to make it easier to exercise during the work day. Consider these steps:

1. Flexible work schedules so you have more time to exercise before or after work when it's still light out.
2. Schedule meetings to end five minutes early to encourage people to get up and move around.
3. Make standing or walking desks available to those who want one.
4. The latest in employee benefits: paid time to [exercise](#).

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