

How to Stay Healthy While Working in an Office--Six Important Tips

GOLDSBORO SPINE CENTER

It's no secret that Americans are working long hours, many of them spent in offices and in front of computers. While these long hours may pay off in a business sense, you may find that the strain is taking a toll on your health.

You may not be able to avoid spending more than one-third of your day in the office, but you can certainly make an effort to stay healthy while you're there. Here are some quick tips that will not only improve your day, but also they will protect your body and mind from long-term damage that can accumulate from those long hours at work.

Get Outdoors

Even if it's for a quick walk at lunch or a stroll around the building during a break, taking some time to get outside is an important part of the day. This activity will keep your body from becoming fatigued and will give you a brief change of scenery. It is also an excellent way to make sure you are getting some [vitamin D](#) from the sun.

Make Sure You Have a Decent Chair

Ideally, your chair should be ergonomic and adjustable for height, back angle and height, seat angle and have adjustable arms. This will help you to control your posture and will put you at a proper distance from your desk without your having to strain or stretch to reach your computer keyboard. Unfortunately, ergonomically designed chairs can be expensive--they typically start at around \$200.

Another option is to use an exercise ball for a chair. While this may sound strange at first, it is actually an excellent way to strengthen your muscles and keep you active while you work. An exercise ball (in an appropriate size that allows your thighs to be parallel with the floor) will help you to maintain proper posture and give you freedom of movement. Plus, the small movements that your body will continually make while sitting on a ball can improve circulation and help relieve some of the pressures of gravity.

But no matter what your chair, don't cross your legs and don't slouch.

Protect Your Eyes

Eye strain is a major concern among many computer users. Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS) is the term used to describe eye and vision problems linked to extended computer use. Symptoms range from dry, irritated or sore eyes to headaches and blurred vision.

The best way to combat this is to take frequent breaks from looking at your screen. You should look away from your screen and focus on a distant object for at least 20 seconds once an hour. And don't wait until your eyes are fatigued to start. The idea is to give your eyes enough rest so that they don't become strained in the first place.

To best protect your eyes your computer monitor should be about an arm's length away--and be sure there is no glare on your screen that makes you squint to see the words. The monitor should be at eye level or slightly below so that you are looking just slightly down at the screen.

Finally, if possible invest in a flat screen monitor. The higher quality and sharper images of these screens is easier on the eyes.

Add Plants to Your Workspace

Offices are typically stuffy with little fresh or flowing air. [Adding plants](#) can actually improve the air quality in your office. Studies have shown that indoor plants reduce volatile organic compounds (VOCs) such as benzene and hexane, which are known to be toxic to humans at high levels, by up to 100 percent over 24 hours in a closed environment.

Not only that, but having a bit of nature indoors will likely do a great deal for your sense of overall well-being, and adding plants is an inexpensive way to brighten your workspace.

Lighting

The lighting in your office can influence everything from your mood to the glare on your computer screen. If possible, try to have some natural light from a window. If this is not possible, and even if it is, you may want to install some full-spectrum light bulbs.

I offer full-spectrum lights bulbs on my site that are designed to help you obtain the balanced sunlight that is essential to your physical and mental health. What's more, you don't have to go through the research, time and energy of determining which light bulbs are the best on the market, as I personally have spent serious time and effort researching and found that [BioPure light bulbs](#) are one of the most accurate natural full-spectrum light

bulbs available.

These light bulbs project full-spectrum light that most closely matches natural daylight and contain the necessary full-spectrum of color (imagine the colors of the rainbow), as well as infrared and the three ultraviolet wavelengths. Full-spectrum lights are beneficial because they will help to compensate for the loss of sun on your skin, which can boost your mood and your health--especially during the darker days of winter.

It is VERY important to know that the only valid full-spectrum lights are fluorescent lights. Incandescent neodymium bulbs frequently advertised for under \$10 are NOT full spectrum. They are color corrected and will NOT provide the same benefits.

Correct Your Keyboard Setup

Using a computer involves frequent repetitive movements that can lead to repetitive stress injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome. If you type 60 words a minute, you'll be making 21,600 key strokes an hour so it's easy to see how the stress can add up. Symptoms can range from mild stiffness to severe pain.

To minimize the risk of such injuries, make sure that your hands and wrists are in a neutral position at the keyboard and try to keep your wrists straight and your elbows at right angles. Also make a point to type lightly. There's no need to press the keys with much force, and this will reduce the strain on your hands, fingers and wrists.