



Offtober

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LIFE

Workplace health needs team effort



By Melissa Carr, Special to 24 hours
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Employers are losing billions in lost productivity due to illnesses. (FOTOLIA)

October is Healthy Workplace Month, a time for organizations — large and small — to work with their employees to create initiatives for health and wellness. Of course, every month is a good time to think about health, and since \$16.6 billion is lost annually to workplace absenteeism, making healthy changes can also benefit Canadian pocketbooks.

The movement started with just one week, but is now a year-round program that helps workplaces promote healthy practices. A website offers reminders of the basics to wellness, including eating right, exercising regularly and sleeping soundly.

Since food has always brought people together, consider hosting a healthy lunch-and-learn seminar. Invite a health professional to your office to speak while you and your colleagues eat a nutritious meal. Blending learning and eating is productive in this instance, but otherwise it is encouraged to have lunch away from the work desk. Taking a real lunch break often helps you be more creative and productive.

Lunchtime also offers an opportunity to get up and move. Taking even a short time to walk after eating can improve digestion. Another way to get moving during the day is to take walking meetings. Many of the world's great thinkers — including Aristotle, modern philosopher Immanuel Kant, and existentialist philosopher Soren Kierkegaard — walked while they thought and talked. You may even find that people look forward to work meetings. Walking meetings will also prevent participants from nodding off.

While sleeping during meetings is highly discouraged, studies show that afternoon naps can boost workplace productivity. Hectic schedules, long work days, faster-paced lives, and always-on electronic devices lead to poor healing, weakened immune systems, depression and anxiety, and poor sleep. Fortune magazine wrote in a 2011 issue about a survey by the National Sleep Foundation that found 34% of respondents said their bosses let them nap at work, while 16% of them said their workplace has a designated nap area.

Some lucky employees have even received the dual benefit of a nap while receiving acupuncture treatment at work, and many workplaces are looking for creative and effective ways, like this, to help reduce the average of 9.4 days of absenteeism per employee. Though there are 31 days to October, there is no time like the present for you and your co-workers to take action toward better health.

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Poll


Does your employer encourage healthy activity at work?

Friday, October 10, 2014

yes

no

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