

# New Study Shows Benefits of a Little Walking at Work



Exercise benefits workers in many ways, from keeping them in shape and helping them maintain a healthy weight to improving their moods and productivity. But getting workers to exercise more—or at all—can be a challenge.

However, walking is just about the easiest form of exercise there is. After all, just about anyone can do and it requires no special equipment. And a new study shows that doing even a little walking at work can provide many benefits.

The study, published in the Nov. 2016 issue of the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, focused on office workers, who are essentially sedentary.

The researchers had 30 sedentary adults between ages 25-50 complete each of the following (one day per session):

- Six hours of uninterrupted sitting;
- Six hours of uninterrupted sitting plus 30 minutes of moderate-intensity treadmill walking in the morning; and
- Six hours of uninterrupted sitting plus six hourly 5-minute microbouts of moderate-intensity treadmill walking.

They measured the participants' energy, mood, appetite, vigor, fatigue and cognitive function.

The researchers found that adults who'd done one session of walking and those who'd done the six mini-sessions had increased self-perceived energy and vigor compared to those who just sat the whole time. Cognitive function didn't significantly vary by session.

But only those participants who'd done the mini walking sessions also had improved mood, decreased levels of fatigue and reduced food cravings at the end of the day. In addition, the multiple short bouts of activity improved mood throughout the day and reduced feelings of fatigue in the late afternoon.

Overall, microbouts of activity led to sustained effects during the day, while the effects of the single bout of activity performed early in the morning didn't

last throughout the day.

Thus, in addition to the beneficial impact of physical activity on levels of energy and vigor, spreading out physical activity throughout the day improved mood, decreased feelings of fatigue and affected appetite.

*Bottom line:* Introducing short bouts of activity during the workday of sedentary office workers is a promising approach to improve overall well-being at work without negatively impacting cognitive performance. Plus, brisk walking, like that performed in this study, requires no special skills or expensive equipment, and can be performed anywhere at any time.

Learn about the results of a study on a lunch-time walking program for workers and how to improve participation in walking programs.