

THE CHANGING SHAPE OF THE DESK POTATO

Don't let the sedentary nature of your work dictate your physical shape! Work it out!

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When the most exercise you get in the day is picking up the phone every five minutes in between business breakfasts, power lunches and long hours, expanding waistlines make the sharp suited figure of the office an ideal rather than the norm.

It's not easy to fit in gym hours around time spent at work, some ride a bike in, some walk, but for most the commute is not easily changed to such healthy means, especially if, for example, one works from home. However, the 'no time to exercise excuse' has long since been relegated to those lacking an imagination when it comes to exercising around the office.

There's a mass market of books, exercise toys and even computer software aimed at providing the enquiring office worker with all the information and help they need; to have muscles other than their fingers toned. While many of them seem slightly strange and may cause some mirth in your colleagues, there is mounting evidence to suggest that such simple stretch exercises may change the

shape of your body and prevent the office evil that is repetitive strain injury.

The cost of staff absence to UK businesses in 2005 was £13bn with 66 days lost across the public services at a cost of £3.4bn to the tax payer.

Preventing such a huge end of year bill is now big business and this includes getting each and every desk potato to do more exercise. Such solutions are not expensive or as inconvenient as you might imagine. Including physical activity in the working day is fast becoming the only practical way for more adults to do more exercise.

Just 30 minutes of regular, moderate intensity exercise, accumulated over a day is enough to prevent serious illness. For example, according to the Sports Council for Wales, a five minute phone call standing burns twice as many calories as one sitting. These exercises are not however just aimed at burning the calories, but also the stress of the pressured office day. *USP* tried and tested many of the stretching stress busters to see which worked best ■

1. The 'Yes-Sir' Stretch

Clasp arms behind your neck and gently move your head forward and back, ensuring you support your head. Repeat 7-10 times to release tension in your nodding, yes-sir muscles.

2. Feel The Floor

Stretch arms out above your head, palms facing in, lifting your torso up out of your hips. Keeping your back long, bend forward to place hands on the floor. Reverse movement and come back up straight. Repeat 5-7 times for better posture.

3. Eye Socket Soother

Place index finger on the eyebrow and middle finger on eyelid. In a circular motion gently massage the eyeball and eye socket. If you use contact lenses only massage the eye socket. Repeat until eyes feel fresher and more awake.

4. Arm Shakey-Shake

Group involvement makes everything fun! Persuade two of your colleagues to hold your wrists on opposite sides of your chair. Ask them to gently shake and vibrate your arms for 15 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times. This is particularly good for minimizing the effects of RSI.

