



# BalanceHealth<sup>SM</sup> Newsletter

April 2014 | Written by the wellness experts at eni



## Avoiding Common Office Hazards

An office isn't often thought of as a dangerous work setting. However, there are some general risks surrounding working in an office environment. Luckily, there are ways to mitigate the majority of these risks.

Let's take a look at a few common office hazards and what we can do to avoid or limit our exposure to them:

### *Spreading Germs*

An office is a highly communal environment. People often work close to one another and touch the same surfaces including door handles, coffee pots, water coolers, conference room tables, etc. These factors make an office environment a prime place for germs to be spread. In fact, msn Healthy Living reports that "the office coffee pot is second only to day-care centers as the most likely place to find norovirus".

The best way to combat germs in the office is to practice good hygiene. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth as to not transfer germs into your body. Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer frequently. Wash your hands after touching communal surfaces or shaking hands with co-workers. This is especially important during cold and flu season. Pass on any food that has

been sitting out in common areas for extended periods of time. Also, do your part if you're sick to avoid spreading germs. Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing, wash your hands after using the bathroom, blowing your nose, or touching your face, and stay home if you are contagious.

### *Eyestrain*

Many office workers spend all day staring at a computer screen which can cause eyestrain. Symptoms of eyestrain include blurred vision or dry, itching or burning eyes, and headaches. To combat eyestrain try making a few simple changes to your computer screen to make it easier to read:

To reduce glare, position your screen so that outside windows are to one side, rather than behind the screen or opposite it. If you select a desk lamp, use one that's not too bright. And position it so that it won't reflect off the screen or other surfaces or shine in your eyes. If glare remains a concern, try to obtain a screen hood or glare-reduction filter.

Adjust the screen's brightness and contrast for your best comfort. You may need to readjust it as the surrounding

For more information or advice about office hazards contact your Wellness Coordinator by calling:

**1.800.327.2255**

**eni's** BalanceHealth program is a confidential service provided by your employer to help you achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle.





lighting changes throughout the day.

If your screen has color options, experiment with different colors until you find one that's easy on your eyes. Green or amber text on a black background is recommended for extended use.

To reduce strain on your eye muscles, the screen should be 18 to 28 inches from your eyes and slightly below eye level. Position your documents in a holder or bookstand at the same height as your screen.

It also helps to give your eyes a rest. When you work at a computer all day or perform other eye-straining tasks, your eyes may benefit from a short break every 10 to 20 minutes. Try these eye-easing exercises:

- Take a moment to glance across the room or out the window, focusing on objects at least 20 feet away.
- Lightly cup your eyes with your palms and relax for a minute.
- Looking away from the screen, roll your eyes up and down, around, and side to side.
- Gently massage the bony area around your eyes (but avoid rubbing your eyes.)

## *Sitting All Day*

Recently there has been a lot of press surrounding the health dangers of sitting all day. Many experts believe that our sedentary lifestyles have contributed to the sharp rise in obesity within the U.S. As we all know, being seriously overweight has the potential to lead to health issues. Even if you exercise regularly outside of work and maintain a healthy weight, sit-

ting down all day in and of itself can threaten your overall health. Emerging research shows that sitting for long periods of time contributes to risk of metabolic syndrome, heart attack, stroke and can even lower life expectancy.

The good news is that there is much you can do throughout your workday to negate these effects by simply incorporating movement into the day. Here are a few ways to add more steps into your workday:

- Park as far as possible from the office
- Take the stairs
- Instead of calling or emailing, deliver messages personally to your co-workers
- Don't save yourself trips, run each of your inter-office errands separately... One trip to grab coffee, another trip to make copies, and another to the mailroom
- Take short walks on your breaks
- Set an alarm on your computer that reminds you to get up once every hour
- Get up and walk around the room during a brainstorming session
- Stand up and march in place during conference calls, just be sure to use the speaker function and don't lose your breath
- Use your lunch break to exercise

***Remember that eni's wellness experts are available to discuss various strategies to combat any of the hazards that may be lurking in your particular workplace.***

For more information or advice about office hazards, contact your Wellness Coordinator by calling  
**1.800.327.2255**

**eni's** BalanceHealth program is a confidential service provided by your employer to help you achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle.