Take a Break!

Does your job require you to sit for long periods of time? Taking small breaks during your workday can have unexpected benefits, according to researchers who study the subject.

In one study, computer workers who took 30-second “micro breaks every 20 minutes had less discomfort than those who didn’t take breaks – without any detrimental effect on productivity. In another study, computer workers who took four extra five-minute breaks each day had less discomfort and eye strain than workers who didn’t take such breaks. They also had significantly faster data-entry speed, making up for the 20 minutes of lost work time.

There’s even some preliminary evidence that taking a break to stand and stretch can add to the health benefits gained from other types of physical activity. One study found that the more breaks a person took from sedentary activity, the lower his or her waist circumference and triglyceride and blood sugar levels tended to be.

Mayo Clinic Health Solutions

Winding Up for the Big Game?

Be careful – watching stressful sporting events can increase your risk of heart attack.

Exposure to stressful sporting events leads to reduced heart blood flow in men who have suffered heart attacks in the past, researchers in China said. The findings point to several mechanisms that may begin to explain the observation that major sporting events are associated with greater risks of heart attacks.

In a double-blind, randomized, crossover study, researchers allowed 38 men who had suffered heart attacks to watch live broadcasts of either pre-selected matches of the 29th Olympics or entertainment television programs.

While watching sports, coronary artery blood flow to the heart muscle was assessed by ST-segment analysis using continuous 12-lead electrocardiography, blood pressure monitoring and heart rate measurement.

In both sessions, blood flow to the heart was generally stable, but when shown a stressful match, the men experienced an increase in their risk for heart attack. Blood pressure increased, heart-rate variability decreased and platelet aggregation – the building blocks of blood clots – increased.

From the American Heart Association’s Scientific Sessions 2009

Go to www.AmericanHeart.org for more heart health information.

‘Low Fat’ Not Always ‘Low Calorie’

While a particular food might be lower in fat, it might not be significantly lower in calories, or a healthier choice, because the fat may be replaced with an equally caloric carbohydrate.

Although some low-fat foods are considered healthier than others, “low fat” labels can be deceiving and lead some people to believe they can eat more food without worrying about consuming too many calories. Several studies that Dr. Brian Wansink, director of the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab, performed showed that people, especially people who are overweight, eat more when food is labeled “low fat” than when it is labeled “regular” and that people feel less guilty eating more food when it is low in fat than when it is higher in fat.

Susan McQuillian, Livestrong.com

Human vs. Automobile – Don’t Play the Odds

Do you run or bike on the road, or near traffic? If so, then every time you go out, you should ask yourself: “can I be seen?” Traffic and runners/bikers are a dangerous combination. Running or biking at night, or at times of low light or poor visibility can be even more dangerous. Many accidents involving cars and runners or bicyclists occur because the driver of the car never saw the other person until it was too late.

Think about using clothing and equipment to make yourself visible. Night-Gear Inc. recommends ‘lighting up’ your bike with the use of headlamps, headlights and taillights and liberal use of retro-reflective accessories. Visibility can always improve with hi-visibility apparel or reflective safety vests. Remember, you need to be seen from all angles to be safe. See some products at www.night-gear.com.

For tips on running safety in a variety of situations, check out: www.runtheplanet.com/trainingracing/safety.

For more information about bicycle safety, go to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration web site, at www.nhtsa.dot.gov. Click on “Traffic Safety,” and then choose “Bicycles” from the left-hand menu (motorcyclists can also get some good safety tips by clicking on “Motorcycles”).

Bulletin Board

Working in a sitting position all day? Go to www.WebMd.com and search for “Exercise at Your Desk” for exercises you can do at work.

www.pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden