

fitness @WORK

► Fitness | By Mish McCormack

{ Fulfilling our workplace obligations sitting at a desk or in front of a computer for eight hours a day can affect our physical and emotional health. Remaining relatively still, hunched over a workstation for long periods of time, can lead to tense muscles, back pain, weight-gain, poor cardiovascular health and – if you’re constantly tapping on a keyboard – repetitive strain injuries.

Sedentary workers generally burn around 560 kilojoules – that’s 135 calories – an hour at work, which compares somewhat unfavourably with the 1700 kilojoules or so (400 calories) an hour consumed by manual labourers hard on the job. So it really comes as no surprise that office workers are constantly fighting – and usually losing – the battle of the bulge.

Mixing work and exercise

However, slaving over a desk is absolutely no excuse for not being able to get some exercise in during the working day. The secret is to make use of every available opportunity to mix work and exercise as often as you can. Be creative, as any movement is better than none and even short bursts of exercise throughout the day will go a significant way towards reducing the negative impact of a sedentary job. Remember that a reason to move is an opportunity, not an inconvenience, and try the following simple techniques:

- **SET** an alarm on your watch or cellphone to go off every hour to remind you to stand up, walk around and stretch for a few minutes.
- **WHENEVER** possible, hand-deliver documents to co-workers.
- **USE** the toilets on the floor above you and take the stairs.

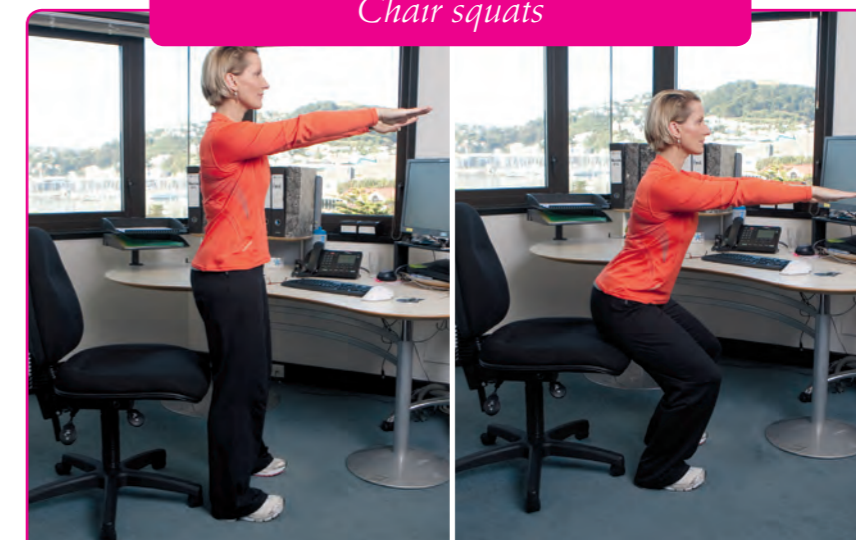
- **TRY** to organise walking meetings instead of sitting in an office or meeting room.
- **WHENEVER** you’re on the telephone – and it’s convenient – stand up and move around.
- **SPEND** half your lunch hour going out for a brisk walk before eating.
- **USE** the stairs instead of the lift whenever possible.
- **ALLOCATE** time for exercise as a regular part of your daily routine.

None of these activities will cause you to break into a sweat, but they will get you moving and give your metabolism a boost. In addition, regular short breaks from work will clear your mind, increase your efficiency and make you more productive overall.

And to relieve those muscles that have tightened due to tension and stress, here are a few stretching and strengthening exercises that can be done while you’re at your desk:

Just because you work in an office doesn’t mean you can’t sneak in some exercise during the day, says Mish McCormack, three times Fitness Life Awards NZ Personal Trainer of the Year

Chair squats



Sit upright in a chair with your arms held out directly in front of you for balance. Stand up until your bottom is hovering just above the seat and hold for the count of five. Stand up fully before repeating 8 to 12 times.

Knee raises



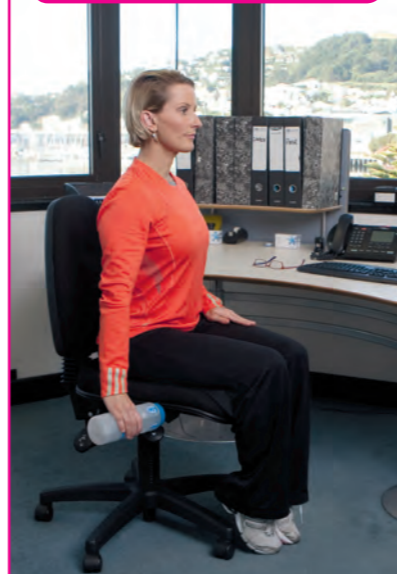
Sit upright in a chair with your abdominal muscles engaged. Keeping your right knee bent, lift your right foot directly off the floor a few centimetres. Hold for the count of five and repeat 8 to 12 times before changing to the other leg.

Leg extension



Sit tall in a chair with your abdominal muscles engaged. Extend your right leg at the knee until it is level with your hip, all the time squeezing your quadriceps. Hold for the count of five, lower and repeat 8 to 12 times before changing to the left leg.

Front raise



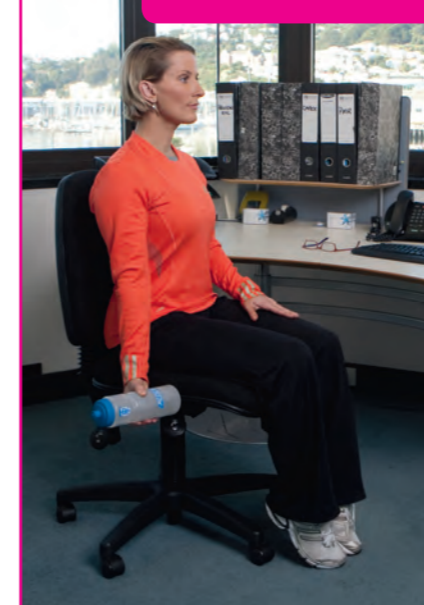
Sit in a chair or stand with your abdominal muscles engaged and your back straight. Holding a weight such as a full water bottle in your right hand with your palm facing the floor, raise your arm straight out in front of you until it reaches shoulder level. Hold for the count of five, lower, and repeat 8 to 12 times before changing to the left arm.

Overhead press



Hold a weight such as a full water bottle in your right hand behind your shoulder. Contract your abdominal muscles and lift the weight directly overhead. Lower slowly and repeat 8 to 12 times before changing to the left arm

Bicep curl



Hold a weight such as a full water bottle in your right hand, palm upwards. With your abdominals engaged and your back straight, curl the weight up towards your shoulder, bending your elbow while contracting your bicep muscle. Lower slowly and repeat 8 to 12 times before changing to the left arm.



YOUR HEART KNOWS
HOW TO GET
FITTER, FASTER

NEW FT4

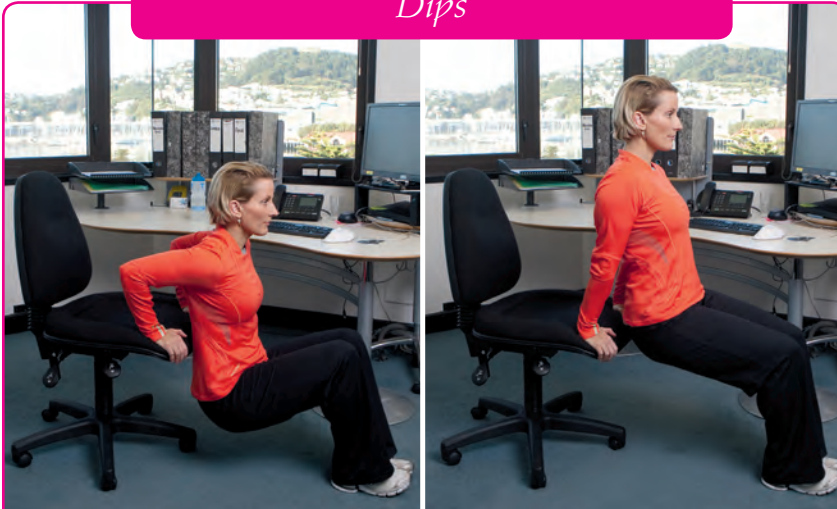


Sometimes going harder and faster isn't the best way to make the most of your training. If you want to keep your training simple with just the basic heart rate features, the new FT4 is the perfect choice. It tells you how many calories you are burning plus its automatic target zone shows when you're improving fitness based on your heart rate.

EFFORT	EFFECT
HARD 80-90%	BENEFITS: INCREASES MAXIMUM PERFORMANCE CAPACITY FOR SHORTER SESSIONS
MODERATE 70-80%	BENEFITS: IMPROVES AEROBIC FITNESS
LIGHT 60-70%	BENEFITS: IMPROVES BASIC ENDURANCE AND FAT BURNING

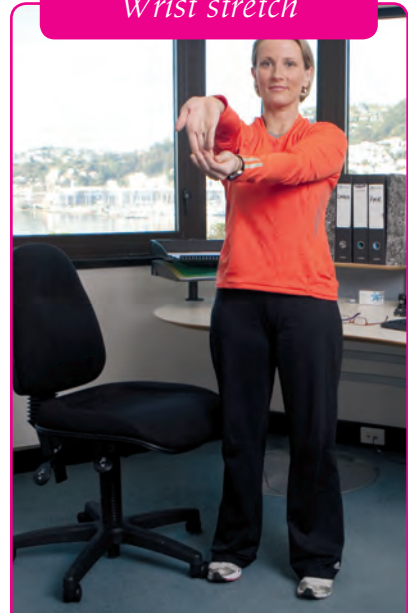
With the FT4, heart rate-based training is made easy and informative, so you can make every session count.

Dips



Make sure your chair is stable and anchored against a desk or wall. Place your hands next to your hips. Move your hips off the front of the chair and bend your elbows, lowering your body until your elbows are at 90 degrees. Push back up and repeat 8 to 12 times.

Wrist stretch



Hold your right arm straight out in front of you, with the palm facing upwards. Take hold of the fingers with your left hand and gently pull down to stretch your forearm. Hold for a count of 10 to 15, then change to the left hand.

Abdominals



Sit upright in your chair with your back against the backrest. With your arms crossed against your chest, curl your spine forward one vertebra at a time, breathing out and contracting your abdominals. Hold for a count of 3 to 5, then repeat.

So there you have it – never ever think again that you just don't have the time to exercise at work! ◀



Mishfitness conducts workplace-based health promotion programmes for a number of New Zealand's major organisations. Find out more at www.mishfitness.com.