

The benefits of living a healthy and active lifestyle

Over the years the physical demand in our daily lives has decreased. More people than ever before are sitting behind a desk or working on the computer for the majority of their day.

Parents are so busy taking care of children and going to work that it is difficult to schedule time throughout the day for themselves. Although we live such busy lives, the importance of exercise comes as no surprise. From the Government's desire to have Canadians get fit as a way of reducing our health care costs, to a child's desire to have parents get fit in hopes of keeping them around longer. Regardless of the situation, a person's health is not only important to them but to everyone around them.

Once a person decides to partake in an active lifestyle, the benefits are substantial. Exercise not only slows down the aging process, it drastically improves the quality of one's life. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, there are numerous physical and mental health benefits gained through exercise. Physical benefits achieved through exercise can be seen immediately, as blood pres-

sure and cholesterol levels decrease. This in turn, lowers the risk of heart disease as well as certain forms of cancer.

Other benefits include increased muscle mass and tone, which improves overall physical appearance and self-esteem. Additional benefits include increased energy levels and a stronger immune system, thus helping in the fight against the cold and flu season.

What if physical exercise could also enhance performance at work, while keeping employees happy and healthy? Well it can! It has been proven that exercise helps reduce symptoms of stress. This stress reducing property that occurs when you exercise regularly, will allow you to effectively deal with stressful situations at work, in turn, improving your efficiency of daily tasks. In addition to stress reduction, exercise provides an increase in one's energy levels. With more energy, an employee has a greater capacity for concentration and attention to detail, resulting in an increase in work performance.

By keeping your employees active and fit, they will become more alert

and productive, resulting in a greater benefit for your company.

This exercise-induced increase in energy will occur after participants begin exercising for 30 minutes a day, three times per week, at a moderate to high intensity level. Keeping mentally strong is just as important as staying physically strong.

"There's no question that people who are fit are more productive; they enjoy their work more and accomplish more." -Dr. Jerome Zukerman, Exercise Physiologist

Life is too short and each day that passes you by without physical activity, is a lost opportunity to improve the quality of your life. So get active now and take advantage of the endless benefits you can experience through exercising.

Danna Stinson, Personal Trainer and Kathi Hall Owner, are from Snap Fitness, Pickering. Visit www.snapfitness.com/pickering.



Kathi Hall,
& Danna Stinson,
Snap Fitness Pickering

Offer incentives

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awaken a taste for fresh fruit that they will continue to enjoy away from the workplace.

Depending on your budget, consider a weekly baseball/hockey/curling team, plan a golf tournament

or offer a gym membership. Plan to get involved in the Canada Healthy Workplace Month (CHWM) which is held annually during fall.

Employers who offer wellness incentives should see lower costs and happy, healthy and refreshed employees. Don't stop the program if some of your employees are not interested. Remember to lead by example.

Don't give up; just get smarter at how you deliver the message or program. Active employees make good business sense.

our employees will be glad you care enough to have made the effort.

Bernadette Smith CHRP, PMP is the owner of In House Human Resources, a provider of employee and safety solutions for small businesses. Visit www.inhousehr.ca.

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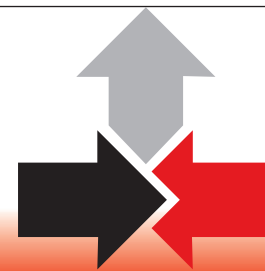
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The Bulletin...by mail

Information from the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade

Winter Edition, 2009

As we prepare for the holiday season, many of us look forward to family time, some brief rest from a busy schedule and most likely the temptation to indulge in excellent food and many treats.

Well, there's good news and bad news. That respite from deadlines and business demands is oh so important to our mental health, but our waistlines are another matter.

Taking a look at the effect this has on all of us, as business owners or staff, there are experts who tell us we need to pay attention to work-life balance, relieving stress and staying in shape for the purpose of being healthy.

With that in mind, we turned to our membership in the health-related industries and asked for advice in how to address these issues. What you will read in the following columns is an insightful collection of suggestions in how to keep you and your staff healthy, with the bottom line being a healthy business.

Please enjoy this edition of the *Bulletin... by Mail* and take note of some of the excellent suggestions offered in the following columns to help you take good health into consideration for both you and your staff, to ensure your business stays healthy as a result.

The Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of our members for their support in 2009 and wish you all happy holidays in the weeks to come. As we wrap up another year, we hope to serve you better than ever in the year ahead and look forward to continued success together in 2010.

Like financial plans, think ahead for your best health

A fact of human nature is that for most people, resolving problems has a higher priority than preventing problems. The result? We tend to pay more attention (and time and money) to fixing problems we know exist, than making wise investments in preventing those problems from developing in the first place.

It doesn't make sense, but when it comes to health it's what we often do - like building a dam after the flood rains have started - often too little, too late.

A business measures its health with a set of financial statements. These state-

ments help executives plan and prepare for the future health and growth of the business. But if executives only use these statements, without considering input from other relevant sources, the business they run is in danger from any number of perils. Like business planning, making choices for health care is a complex subject, with many competing voices wanting to tell you what to do and how to proceed. These voices are often contradictory, and making sense of them can be overwhelming. How is a normal person supposed to know who and what to listen to?

To further complicate things, many people "know" it's important that a

balance of eating right, doing exercise, getting good rest, having a hobby and active social and family lives are all desirable and good goals. They authentically try to do the best they can to achieve them. On the flip side are the urgent pressures of work, family obligations, professional demands, and finances, to name a few.

...please see 'Consult' on page 2



Zander Townend,
Ajax BodyWisdom Clinic

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec. 10: AGM & CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at: **Ajax Convention Centre.**

Dec. 24 to Jan. 4: BOARD OFFICE CLOSED

Please be aware, the offices of the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade will close at noon on Christmas Eve and reopen on Jan. 5. The Board extends best wishes to our members and partners for a happy and safe holiday season.

Jan. 7: LUNCH & LEARN (FREE, MEMBERS ONLY)

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at: **CIBC in the Durham Centre, Ajax.**
Ron Vereggen, of **Rapid Success Coaching Inc.**

Jan. 12: NETWORKING AFTER 5

5 to 7 p.m. at **Boston Pizza**, Salem & Kingston Roads, Ajax.
Celebrate our 600th member with us!
Cost is \$15.75 for members, \$26.25 for future members

Jan. 28: PRESIDENT'S INAUGURAL DINNER

Deer Creek Golf Clubs. Registration details TBA.

Pre-registration is required for events. Please visit apboardoftrade.com and the event listings to find event details and registration forms.

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Exercising can improve workplace productivity

What if I told you that you could have happier, healthier employees and a more productive workplace in 30 minutes. Interested?

Research (conducted at the University of Bristol) shows that exercise performed during the workday has enormous benefits on workplace productivity.

After engaging in exercise, workers return to their jobs with sharper focus, improved performance and efficiency, more patience towards others, a greater sense of cooperation and most importantly a sense of reduced stress. Stress related absences cost Canadian employers an estimated \$3.5 billion each year (Statscan). 83% of Canadian workers identify stress as a major health concern within their organization (Canadian Mental Health Association).

Exercise in the workplace does not need to be time consuming or expensive. As a personal trainer and consultant, I frequently design efficient and highly effective 30 minute programs that can be done with little to no equipment. It's amazing how people's lives both at work and at home can be changed with as little as 30 minutes of exercise. 30 minutes of exercise is sufficient to increase oxygen delivery to the entire body and produce endorphins.

These feel good hormones help to reduce stress and improve mood. 79% of participants in the Bristol study reported improved mental and interpersonal performance on exercise days and 72% reported improved time management on exercise days.

We all know the importance of work-life balance for the employee. Most individuals really struggle to find the time between work, commuting, family, household responsibilities, continuing education, etc. to exercise. Employees recognize when an employer makes a change and there is a positive effect on this balance. An employer who encourages and motivates employees to exercise during the day can expect a great return on investment (ROI) in the form of increased productivity and reduced absence. Healthy, active employees feel better, take less sick days and are more focused.

An exercise at work program should be one that is structured, fun and energizing, provides an opportunity for both exertion and relaxation and is appropriate for all levels. I recommend offering group exercise programs 3 times per week for 30 minutes in duration. Mid-day (between 11am-1pm) is the ideal time since this is the best time to avoid the afternoon energy crash many people experience.

An exercise program at work is

quick, easy and economical to implement. All you need is space to hold a class and an instructor. Start by finding a qualified fitness company. Ask to see such things as certification credentials of instructors, current CPR certification and proof of professional liability insurance.



James Grundy
Optimum Bodies

Typical class fees vary. Expect in the range of \$7-\$12 per person per class depending on the length and type of class. Many companies will also offer packages. I recommend programs that are done in 8 week packages as it often takes this long for someone to really make a lifestyle change. Ask how long they have been in business. You do not want a company that is going to disappear on you.

An investment in employee health is an investment in your company's health. So let's get moving.

James is the owner of Optimum Bodies Inc. Optimum Bodies Inc. has been providing corporate and private health and fitness services for the past decade. They are located at 619 Kingston Rd. West, Unit 9, Ajax. 905-231-2235 www.optimumbodies.com

Consult an expert

...continued from page 1

What happens with this competition for time and attention? The urgent unfortunately and frequently wins out over the important.

The result? While not technically "sick", staff also don't enjoy wellness. While modern medicine is excellent in some sophisticated areas, it doesn't deal well with many of the low grade, sub-acute and chronic ailments people most commonly suffer from, such as insomnia, digestive disorders, hypertension, back pain, headaches, depression, and menstrual irregularities, to name a few. These

problems can impair anyone's wellness and functioning in all areas of their lives – including the quality of work they do and lost time – which can add up to big losses in productivity and profitability.

The question can appear to be "Where do I start?" That depends on a wide variety

of factors – but making a real commitment and actually starting is probably the most important ingredient! With such a vast and diverse set of choices available, there are also various ways of moving forward. Many health care professionals will be happy to sit down with you and your team to consult and strategize on how to help improve, protect and promote better health. Start now!

Zander Townend, director of the Ajax BodyWisdom Clinic, is a Master of Medical Qigong Therapy, Diplomate in TCM Acupuncture, and on the Senior Faculty of the International Jin Shin Do® Bodymind Acupressure Foundation. Website: <http://www.bodywisdom.ca> or e-mail info@bodywisdom.ca

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Encourage participating in a weight loss program

The Problem:

The percentage of Canadians who are overweight or obese has risen dramatically in recent years. In 2004 approximately 6.8 million Canadian adults aged 20-64 were overweight and an additional 4.5 million were obese. Dramatic increases in obesity among Canadians over the past 30 years has been deemed to constitute an epidemic.

The majority of chronic health problems are related to obesity and include:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Cardiovascular disease
- Arthritis
- Type II diabetes
- Fatty liver disease

The obesity epidemic is costing employers. In 2008 The Conference Board estimated that obesity-related health problems cost U.S. companies about \$4.8 billion each year in medical coverage and absenteeism – more than smoking and problem drinking.

The Solution

Taking part in a weight loss program can help your employees get on the right track to health. A recognized program has experts who can recognize that long-term weight loss requires a multifaceted approach to achieve a lifetime of good health.

This includes giving attention to each client's individual needs and health conditions. Programs help your employees reduce weight through the important combination of nutritional therapy, exercise, behavior modification and education.

Health coaches are able to address the needs of clients on an individual basis. In the right program, clients have access to a team of health professionals including a Naturopathic Doctor and a Certified Nutritional Consultant to help them achieve their health goals.

Encourage your employees to join a program they can trust.

For every dollar spent on a Corporate Wellness program the returns have been a cost savings of between \$2.30

and \$10.10 in the areas of decreased absenteeism, fewer sick days, reduced WSIB/WCB claims, lowered health insurance costs and improvements to employee performance and productivity.



Dr. Susan Walker,
U Weight Loss

In a good program, you can expect:

- Fat loss
- Increased energy
- Lower blood pressure and cholesterol
- Less depression and anxiety
- Less pain and joint discomfort

Aren't your employees worth it?

Dr Susan Walker is a licensed Naturopathic Doctor for U Weight Loss, which has a Pickering location. To learn more about the programs they offer visit www.uweightloss.com.

Getting employees active for the right reasons

Workplace wellness makes good business sense

We all work hard. Increasingly employees are spending longer hours at work either working overtime or connected online. It all adds up.

Wellness programs may help employees reduce stress, avoid workplace accidents, ward off future potential health problems or assist in managing existing ones. For organizations wellness programs mean reduced turnover, increased productivity, less absenteeism and lower benefit use.

So with so much to gain, why are most workplaces devoid of a wellness program? From lack of time, space or resources, employers may believe that they can't afford to get involved in their employees' wellness. But by making small changes, everyone benefits.

The following low cost ideas should get you started, but ideally using employee suggested variations would receive more buy-in.

Mediation Mondays – Have small meetings to allow employees to plan or mediate upcoming deadlines or problems. This will avoid the Monday morning blues and allow workers to feel less pressure and hopefully more in control.

Tea Time Tuesdays – What could be better than a cup of tea (or coffee) and a chat with the boss? Having a break with your staff allows them to let you know what they are working on, inform you of any concerns and also offer their solutions to problems they encounter. It should make them feel that their opinion is important.

Walking Wednesdays – Plan a lunch time walking club. This is a fitness booster and a great stress reliever. If the company has some property with flower beds, have summer weed-ing sessions or fall or spring clean up

workouts.

Tension Free Thursdays – Have someone lead a low impact five minute stretch break. This fun exercise can be done standing at a desk or safely on the shop floor and is guaranteed to relieve tension and refresh which in turn should increase productivity.

Fresh Fruit Fridays – For a small expense, stock the lunchroom with fresh fruit. Have fun providing the staples, but try to add some exotic fruit (with blindfolded taste testing) to avoid boredom.

One word of caution, poll the staff first to ensure that there are no allergies to any of your picks. You may

...please see 'Offer' on page 4



Bernadette Smith,
In House
Human Resources