

FITNESS BREAKOUT

Break Free From the Average Body Type



Is a Treadmill Desk in Your Future?

"Human beings were not meant to sit in little cubicles staring at computer screens all day, filling out useless forms and listening to eight different bosses drone on about about mission statements." – Peter Gibbons (Office Space)



What on earth is this?

I'll tell you exactly what it is. It's a treadmill desk and no, it's not a joke. These things are for real and they could very well be the workstation of the future. The treadmill desk was designed by the Mayo Clinic's Dr. James Levine. It's pretty self-explanatory: a treadmill with a desk attached to it. So here's how it works. Basically, instead of sitting at your desk while working at your computer, you walk while working at your computer. Test subjects burned 100 calories per hour while walking on the treadmill desk at a slow pace (1 mph).

What is the point?

The idea behind this contraption is to give people who don't have time to workout an opportunity to shed a few pounds. So how much weight can one expect to lose?

Well, if you take a typical 40 hour work week and 50 work weeks per year, this is 2,000 hours of extra walking per year. At 100 calories per hour, this equates to 200,000 calories! A pound of fat is about 3,500 calories, so assuming food intake and everything else is kept constant, we're talking about 57 pounds per year!

Are there other benefits?

Levine and other advocates of the treadmill desk argue that in addition to burning calories, the extra activity during the workday will help lower stress levels and increase creativity without hindering productivity. The obvious long-term benefit is healthier employees and if this translates into higher energy levels and fewer sick days, the increase in effectiveness of the workforce could very well justify the cost to the employer. In fact several large companies such as Mutual of Omaha have purchased treadmill desks for this very reason.

I have mixed feelings about the treadmill desk.

On one hand, I am glad that someone has discovered an innovative way to incorporate exercise into the lives of sedentary workers. If you've read some of my posts on cardio, you will know that I'm a huge advocate of low-intensity steady state cardio (LISS), walking in particular. I believe everyone should try to incorporate more walking into their everyday lives and this is definitely a creative way to do that. If every office worker in America was on one of these, there would definitely be an improvement in the overall health and wellness of our population.

On the other hand, this whole concept just seems... unnatural. It seems to me that too many people are unwilling to take responsibility for their well being and this invention is a byproduct. If people just made it a priority to exercise for a few hours a week, the treadmill desk would be completely unnecessary. The fact that obesity levels have gotten so bad that someone actually had to come up with something like this is disturbing, but this is the reality we face. A recent article in USA Today states that if current trends continue, within the next ten years, 43% of Americans will be obese. By 2018, obesity could cost the United States over \$340 billion a year and make up over 20% of health care spending.

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I am an office worker and I would never use a treadmill desk.

Why not? I simply don't need one. Although I work in an office 40 plus hours a week, I am far from sedentary. I make it a point to get in plenty of exercise outside of work. I don't believe having a busy schedule should be an excuse to sacrifice your health and wellness. In fact, I believe that staying healthy and fit should be a higher priority than work. After all, your employer may help pay your bills, but it won't help save your life when you get older. For the majority of people, there is no need for a trade off. Even if you work 60 hours a week, that leaves an extra 108 hours for other things. Surely, you can spare a few hours to invest in your long-term health.

So what would I suggest instead of a treadmill desk?

Real exercise. Get outside and be active. Play a sport. Lift weights. Go swimming. Go biking. [Watch your diet.](#) I haven't even talked about this, since that's not what this post is about, but making positive changes in what you eat and how much you eat will improve your health more than any amount of exercise or any type of treadmill desk ever will. But that's just my opinion. How about all the readers? Post some comments and let me know what you think. To all you desk jockeys out there, would you use a treadmill desk?