

Staying Healthy For A Longer Work Week

Submitted by Ha Hoang, T² Student Project Assistant & UNH Business Administration Student

The average work week for Americans usually consists of 40 hours. However, public works professionals often work much more than 40 hours during the winter, since they are responsible for maintaining our roads and bridges. During the winter, highway department officials are required to work in frigid temperatures and in limited sunlight. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle can help you get through these longer work shifts, and stay awake, alert, and productive.

Here are some tips to help you when working longer hours this winter:

- 1. Get Enough Sleep!** Nothing is more important than getting enough sleep. Signs that you are sleep-deprived include yawning throughout the day, being more forgetful than usual, or experiencing body aches. Since your immune system recharges during sleep, sleep-deprived people are more likely to get sick. Studies support that the average adult functions best with 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night. However, other adults may need 9 to 10 hours per night, so it is very important to consider how much sleep you need on an individual basis. Learn to trust your body, not your clock.
- 2. Get a Healthy Intake.** Make sure you're getting enough vitamins and fluids during the day. Avoid coffee, soda, energy drinks, and candy bars. These will reduce your energy levels. Eat a healthy breakfast in the morning and avoid the typical meeting food, such as donuts. Instead, snack on fresh fruit and raw nuts to increase energy and drink plenty of water to keep you hydrated. The Institute of Medicine advises that men consume 3 liters (about 13 cups) and women consume 2.2 liters (about 9 cups) of total beverages a day.

- 3. Dress Accordingly.** Dress in layers so that you'll be comfortable with temperature changes. Being too hot may make you tired and being too cold will make you be less productive. Wear shoes or boots that support your feet if you're standing or walking for long hours.
- 4. Use Your Breaks Wisely.** Get up and take a stretch break if you've been sitting down for over an hour. Walk around and loosen up your legs and you'll feel more alert once the blood gets moving. If you've been doing strenuous work, stretch out and sit down to relax. Don't think about work while on break and take deep breaths to help your body relax. Enjoy a healthy snack to help you feel better as well.

- 5. Don't Work If You Can't.** Don't take on additional work or more hours if you're not feeling well. More importantly, do not report to work if you are sick. Instead, stay home to avoid spreading the germs. Your body needs time to relax and heal. Make taking care of yourself a first priority; work can wait.



Taking care of your body to be more awake and alert is important for you and the safety of others. Ensure you are taking the necessary steps to be able to be at your full potential while working.

Stay safe out there this winter!

Reference: Seven Tips for Staying Healthy at Work. Team Beachbody - Improving Your Quality of Life with Health and Fitness. Retrieved from <http://www.howtobefit.com/stay-healthy-at-work.htm> on December 1, 2010.