



# Manage 4 Health Risks at Office

## Coffee

Up to 400 milligrams (mg) of caffeine a day appears safe for most healthy adults. This amount of caffeine equates to about four cups of brewed coffee. (Mayo Clinic, 2014)

However, if you are sensitive to caffeine intake or you consume more than 4 cups of coffee a day you may experience these side-effects: insomnia, restlessness, nervousness, irritability and fast heartbeat. (Mayo Clinic, 2014). Talk to your doctor if you have concerns about caffeine consumption being safe for you.

What compounds the negative impact of coffee is if you add sugar to your coffee. The American Heart Association recommends 9 tablespoons of added sugar per day for men and 6 teaspoons of added sugar for women.

Added sugars are sugars and syrups that are put into foods during the preparation or processing of foods/drinks. They are also sugars added to foods such as granulated sugar. Natural sugars are found *naturally* in foods such as fruit (fructose) and milk (lactose). (American Heart Association, 2014)

If you are consuming 4 cups of coffee while adding 2 tablespoons of sugar to each cup, then you are already at 8 tablespoons of added sugar for the day.

There are some steps you may take to reduce your consumption of coffee:

1. Identify what triggers you to want coffee. For example, if you just came out of a stressful meeting and want a cup of coffee, then stress may be the trigger for you to drink coffee. If stressed, go for a walk outside instead of drinking coffee.
2. Go decaf. Decaf coffee's taste and look similar to their caffeinated counterparts. Be aware of how much sugar you add.
3. Gradually cut down. Start with eliminating your 3 o'clock coffee break. You can recharge by stepping outside and walking for 5 minutes while breathing deeply to maximize your oxygen intake.

In terms of money, if you are spending \$4 a day on 2 cups of coffee then you are spending about \$20 a week and about \$1000 a year! If you would've invested this \$1000 in an Index 500 Mutual Fund back in May, 2010 that money would've doubled by 2015. (Morningstar, 2015).

## The Vending Machine

As mentioned earlier, added sugars are detrimental to your health. The problem with vending machine snacks is that they are loaded with



fat, cholesterol, added sugar and obscure ingredients.

There are situations where office workers don't have time to get lunch because they are working through their lunch hour. These same workers may be working well past 5 o'clock and putting in 14 hour days.

When this is the situation, it is very easy to run down the hall to the vending machine and pick up a quick snack for about \$1 or \$2.

Possible solutions to avoid the vending machine are:

1. Bring healthy foods from home to keep at your desk. Before the workweek begins, head to your supermarket and get packaged foods that are good for you such as a salad kit. Beware of high sodium foods like canned soups and high sugar snacks like fruit bars or dried fruit.
2. If you cook in the evening, cook a little extra and bring it to work the next day.
3. Instead of snacking on chips, snack on vegetables. Bring in a cup of sautéed vegetables or raw vegetables with a sprinkle of salt and dash of another seasoning (pepper, paprika, basil, etc.). Try to avoid using creamy salad dressings as you are adding unnecessary calories.

## Your Chair

If you have poor posture, your bones are not properly aligned, and your muscles, joints, and ligaments take more strain than normal.

Faulty posture may cause you fatigue, muscular strain, and, in

later stages, pain. Many individuals with chronic back pain can trace their problems to years of faulty postural habits. In addition, poor posture can affect the position and function of your vital organs, particularly those in the abdominal region. (American Physical Therapist Association, 1998)

Tips for maintaining good posture while sitting (American Physical Therapist Association, 1998):

- Sit with back firmly against chair; chair should be low enough to allow placement of both feet on the floor with knees slightly higher than hips.
- Keep your head up and avoid leaning forward. If you work long hours at a desk or typewriter, keep your chair close-in to the desk top to help maintain your upright position.
- If you feel your low back arching forward while sitting, cross your legs or put your feet up on a stool.

Please see exercises you can do right at your chair at [www.danriveracpt.com](http://www.danriveracpt.com). Click on the menu called EXERCISE VIDEOS and access CHAIR YOGA VIDEO #1.

## Stress

Stress that's left unchecked can contribute to health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and diabetes. (Mayo Clinic, 2013)

If there are situations at office that are really stressing you out, try to identify what's troubling you and develop an action plan to handle the stressor.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, step away from your desk and bring a notebook with you. Find a private spot and spend about 15 minutes answering the following questions:

1. What specific issue is stressing you out? For example, "I need to prepare a presentation by tomorrow."
2. What is the risk or worst possible consequence of not handling the issue? For example, "If I don't complete the presentation the participants will not have anything to reference."
3. How can you mitigate the worst case scenario? For example, "I can have all my notes prepared in my notebook so if the participants don't have a presentation then I can speak from my notes. After the meeting, I can forward them meeting notes for their information."
4. Create an action-item list. For example, make a prioritized list of tasks you need to do to deliver that presentation.

On the next page is a template with the above questions for your own use. To further reduce stress, begin an exercise program.

Regular exercise improves mood, relieves anxiety and depression, and enhances energy. When you feel great and believe in yourself, your mindset at work is bound to be optimistic, and that bodes well for job performance – and career growth. When you stay physically active, you're taking care of your body and your brain – reducing health risks and increasing your capacity for learning, motivation, and sharp thinking. (American Council on Exercise, 2013)

Issue (What's causing stress)	Risk	Mitigation Plan	To Do List

## Works Cited

- American Council on Exercise. (2013). *Exercise To Boost Your Job Performance*.
- American Heart Association. (2014). *Added Sugars*.
- American Physical Therapist Association. (1998). *The Secret of Good Posture*.
- Mayo Clinic. (2014). *Nutrition and Healthy Eating*.
- Mayo Clinic. (2013). *Stress Management*.
- Morningstar. (2015). *Vanguard 500 Index Inv - Growth of \$10,000*.