



Health Advice

Longevity in your working life: the 7-day challenge for your health

Growing old healthily – sounds great, doesn't it? And the best thing is, we ourselves can do a lot to make sure that this is the case. After all, how long we live and how healthy we stay is only determined by our genes by around 25 percent. We can have a major influence on our longevity with our lifestyle. And it isn't all about living longer, but about spending the time we have to live as healthily as possible and by minimising the risk factors to our health such as stress, obesity, a lack of sleep or too little exercise, for example. It might not sound new, but these factors are among the most important levers that we can adjust in our working lives so we can make the most of life in the here and now, and enjoy a fit and healthy retirement which lasts as long as possible.

After all, anyone in the workforce still has a lot of life ahead of them: statistically speaking, the life expectancy for men today is approximately 78 years, while women live to an average age of 83. The risks of dementia, bad joints and cardiovascular disease increase with age, though. Yet we can take precautions against these risks during our working lives, regardless of how old we are. And the sooner we start doing so, the better.

The 7-day longevity challenge

Get together with your colleagues and start the "longevity challenge": 7 days with seven impulses for more health and well-being in your everyday working routine – and a long, healthy life.

Day 1: A balanced diet

Take five servings of fruit and vegetables to work today, and include at least three different colours of fruit and vegetables on your plate with every meal. Studies have shown that a Mediterranean diet, which is particularly rich in vegetables, whole grains and nuts, and which is low in meat, can increase a person's life expectancy by several years.

Day 2: Exercise more

Physical exercise keeps you fit and healthy and strengthens your cardiovascular system, especially when you challenge yourself, researchers at the University of Basel have found. At least 150 minutes of endurance exercise per week is recommended. Take a brisk walk during your lunch break today, take your bike to work, take the stairs instead of the lift, or do a workout together with your colleagues after work.

Day 3: Sleep well

An American study found that restful sleep can extend the lifespan of women by more than 2 years and that of men by almost 5 years. Bearing this in mind, make sure that you enjoy at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night. The 10-3-2-1 rule ensures an even more restful night's sleep: no caffeine 10 hours before bedtime, no food for 3 hours before, no work for 2 hours before, and switch off devices with screens 1 hour before going to bed.

Day 4: Reduce stress

A hectic pace and deadline pressures at work? Long-term stress is bad for your health. Take a 10-minute break and write down what triggers your stress and what you can do to prevent it. Are stress, tension, and deadline pressures quite literally leaving you out of breath? Get it back with the 4-7-8 breathing technique. This technique calms your heart rate and also works when standing: Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds. Hold your breath for 7 seconds. Then breathe out through your mouth for 8 seconds. Repeat this exercise several times.

Day 5: Make sure that you drink enough

How much should you actually drink per day? A healthy, sedentary adult should drink around 35 ml of water per kilogram of body weight. This means that a woman weighing 70 kilograms needs about 2.5 litres of water per day, while a man weighing 88 kilograms needs almost 3 litres. Important: your need for fluid increases in hot weather, when exercising and when you're ill.

Day 6: Train your brain

The brain is like a muscle which needs to be trained to stay fit. That's exactly what neuroplasticity is all about: the ability of the brain to develop and adapt to new challenges. Therefore, do something different today, such as learning a word in Chinese or taking a different route to the cafeteria. Arrange a short-term memory lunch break game with your colleagues: everyone memorises seven words at the start of lunch and has to recall them at the finish.

Day 7: Maintain social contacts

Researchers have found that daily contact with others extends our lives. Make a conscious effort to spend time with your colleagues today: call someone from your professional circle you haven't spoken to for a while. And thank someone who's doing a really great job.

Extra tip: Why not share your challenge experiences together with your colleagues, on the staff intranet for example? Who knows, maybe it will lead to a permanent "longevity club"!

How to stay fit and healthy for longer

Being fit and active at 80, 90 or even 100 years old is something we all wish for. With the right diet, enough exercise and restful sleep, you can increase your chances of living a long and healthy life.



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