

Stepping Up Productivity:

Understanding the role foot health plays in the workplace

By J. Richard Werkman, D.Ch., B.Sc. Podiatric Medicine

Staying active is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Encouraging employees to stay active through regular exercise and promoting healthy living results in more productive, happier employees which in turn for the employer improves the bottom line. Consider the impact healthy feet can have on profitability through:

Reduced

- ✓ Absenteeism
- ✓ Insurance costs

Increased

- ✓ Productivity
- ✓ Morale

The feet are one of the most neglected areas of the body. Women wear shoes with high heels and narrow toes, men require work boots that often have little or no support and cushioning. Standing for prolonged periods of time, or walking long distances can often lead to painful feet.

As we age our feet age too and the stress and strain, wear and tear we have subjected our feet to combined with the aging process can make staying active a difficult task. Many people believe that it is normal for their feet to hurt. Not so!

Here are a few workplace tips.

If you sit at a desk, do some range of motion exercises:

- ✓ Rotate your feet in circles and move them up and down. This enhances their flexibility and avoids stiffness in muscles and tendons.
- ✓ Extend your legs and bend your feet up at the ankle to stretch the calves. These movements also promote better circulation and less swelling.
- ✓ Elevate your feet for ten or fifteen minutes.

Standing for prolonged periods can result in contraction of the calf muscles. Adding a fatigue mat may ease discomfort.

- ✓ Do stretching exercises throughout the day. Simply lean against the wall with one foot forward and one back, keeping your knee straight. Hold for 10 seconds.
- ✓ Move about as often as possible to avoid stiffness and swelling.

✓ Soft soled, laced walking shoes are ideal for support and comfort. Add a gel insole to provide cushioning and socks made of acrylic fiber so that perspiration is “wicked” away.

If work boots are a necessity consider adding cushioning insoles, which are available over-the-counter. Always make sure the boot is not only the right length but also the correct width. You should allow a 1/2” space in the boot beyond your longest toe.

Shoes are not always the cause of foot pain. Sore arches or heels may mean that you have a foot imbalance. Flat feet often cause strain to the arches which can be easily corrected with custom-made orthotic devices prescribed by a registered chiropodist. Ingrown toenails can be a painful and debilitating condition that can be painlessly treated.

Healthy foot care begins at home and extends into the workplace. Gone are the days when we suffer in silence from common problems needlessly such as corns, calluses, thick/ingrown toenails, plantar warts, foot pain and ulcers, skin infections, sports injuries and arthritic and diabetic foot problems. **Stamp out foot problems today!**

J. Richard Werkman is a Registered Chiropodist providing exceptional foot care for all ages. For more information or if you would like him to provide a foot health seminar in your workplace contact him at 905.845.4817 or info@werkman.ca www.werkman.ca