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Office Fitness

By **Br. Raphael Daoud Jackson**

Lower back pain and injuries are common ailments among Americans. Many assume that lower back pain or injury usually results from heavy lifting or other physically strenuous activities that accompany an active lifestyle. But this assumption is false.

My chiropractor once told me that the human body was not designed for sitting or lying down. Prolonged sitting weakens spine and back muscles. The average two-hour commute and the average eight-hour workday cause many American professionals to sit for six to eight hours every day. This estimate does not count time on the couch watching television, in our chair checking e-mails, or eating at the dining table.

A slight adjustment in our daily work routine can enable us to combat the plague of chronic back problems and increase our overall health, appearance, attitude and productivity. Cultivate these six habits to improve health and well-being.

1. **Take a breather:** During your lunch break take a lap or two around your building. Walking increases oxygen intake and invigorates the senses. If you work under close supervision and time constraints, take a bathroom break to the furthest bathroom from you.
2. **Stairway to fitness:** If you work in a multi-story building, take the stairs instead of the elevator. If your workplace is more than ten stories, exit at least two to three floors from where you need to be. Walking briskly or jogging these extra few flights can also help you strengthen your leg muscles and build your lung capacity.
3. **Parking:** Choose an inconvenient parking space. A short walk in the morning can help you mentally prepare in the morning, and the same walk can help you unwind in the afternoon.
4. **Drink lots of water:** Cutting back on caffeine dependency and staying hydrated combats drowsiness and allows your brain to function at full capacity.
5. **Get up and stretch:** Stretching increases your circulation. Don't be afraid to look silly; regular stretching may encourage your colleagues to join in, not to mention adopt some of the other five less noticeable rituals.
6. **Stay positive:** Although this exercise is not physical, it builds a constructive attitude. Avoiding office gossip and negative conversation helps you to stay motivated and will also attract similarly minded people.

Feel free to adjust each routine to fit your circumstances, and don't be afraid to increase intensity over time. This routine is no substitute for a serious fitness plan, but consider how frequently you can work these six routines into your schedule: it can be an excellent start.

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