

Here's to your health

Seven tips for executives on the go

By **Dr. James R. Stevens**, co-founder, president and chief medical officer American Institute of Healthcare & Fitness (AIHF)

There is no shortage of data telling us that the incidence of obesity in this country has reached epidemic proportions, or that the cost of treating chronic diseases is the most preventable health problem facing our health care system.

So what can you as an individual executive do about it? Be the example. Manage your health like you manage your business.

Intellectually, we all understand how managing our diets and being more physically active contribute to our overall health. These two seemingly simple steps can add years to our lives, yet many of us fail to spend the time to do either one.

For corporate executives, job responsibilities require time commitments beyond the 40-hour work week. It is a personal sacrifice that many would say comes with the territory. Finding the time for your health might be a challenge, but it also might be the best investment decision you ever make.

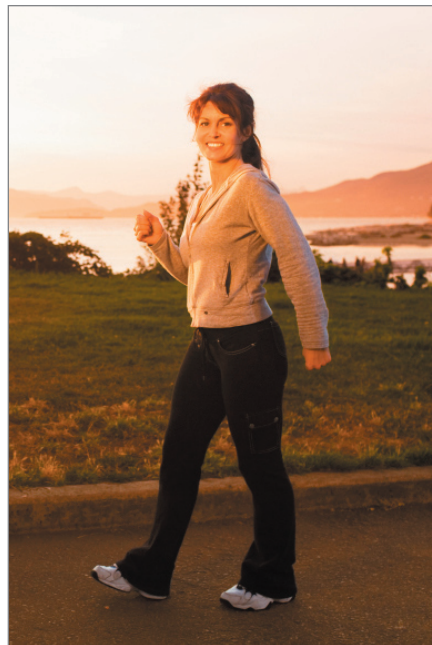
The following are suggestions for incorporating health and wellness back into your schedule.

1. Change the way you think about your health. Maintaining your health is as much a business strategy as developing new products or investing in new markets. Studies have shown that the healthier you are, the more productive you are. This might not give you more hours in the day, but it can give you more work for the hours that are available.

2. Don't forget your annual physical. The recommendation to get an annual physical often falls on deaf ears, particularly for males. Many view the annual physical as a waste of time because they feel good. However, detecting problems early is the best way to prevent a major health crisis.

3. Be diligent about cancer screenings. Skin, breast, colon and prostate cancers are treatable if detected early. Do not be deceived by a family medical history that does not include cancer. Many people who have no family history of cancer, get cancer.

4. Consult a nutritionist. Most insurance plans now cover a consultative visit with a nutritionist. Learn how to adapt your diet to your lifestyle. Whether it is eating on the run between flights or dining at the finest restaurants, an experienced nutritionist can give you tips that would work for the executive lifestyle.



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5. Understand that fitness needs change as we get older. As we approach middle age, our fitness regimen must be balanced between strength training and aerobic conditioning. If you cannot find time to get to the gym every day, then look for small ways to incorporate fitness into

your daily schedule. For those whose job requires frequent travel, fitness training is even more of a challenge. However, being active in as many ways as possible at home or away will reduce your disease risk. For example, aerobic activity, such as walking briskly for 30 minutes five times per week or jogging 20 minutes three times per week can reduce the odds of developing coronary heart disease by as much as 40 percent. Weight training is recommended two days per week, separated by at least one day. Consulting a personal trainer can be helpful in developing a training program designed specifically for you. Whatever approach to fitness works best for your lifestyle is the one you will benefit from the most because it is the one you will stick with.

6. Consider stress management. Whether it is a massage, executive coaching session or weekend getaway, learning to manage stress can be the biggest challenge executives face. Many underestimate the relationship between stress and our health, but the consequences — both personal and professional — are real. Eliminating stress from your life completely is unrealistic. A more realistic approach is regular exercise, Tai Chi, yoga, laughter, spiritual development or a collegial support network.

7. Be prepared while traveling abroad. One-third of those who travel abroad become ill during their trips. Be prepared. Just a list of current medications and known drug allergies gives health care providers an abundance of information about your current health status. Advances in technology now make it possible for you to travel with complete medical records. There are Web-based applications that allow access to medical records online from anywhere in the world. Another way is to carry an electronic medical record on a secure and encrypted USB key. Whether it's an electronic medical file or simply a list of medications, this information can prove to be a lifesaver should you become ill while traveling. ☺☺☺

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