

# HEALTH BULLETIN

News that can save your life

## Click It Or Croak

Here's a purely selfish reason to tell your kids (or your buddies) to buckle up even when they're sitting in the back seat of your car: **unbelted back-seat passengers drastically increase a driver's risk of dying in an accident.** Researchers at the University of Buffalo used crash-test dummies to study the outcomes of head-on collisions with rear passengers either belted or unbelted. Their finding: drivers were nearly three times more likely to die in the unbelted-passenger scenario, says Dr James Mayrose, the lead author. "The unrestrained occupant is thrown into the seat in front of him, forcing the driver into the steering column and dashboard." According to an Arrive Alive survey, 92.4 percent of back-seat passengers do not wear seat belts. Make it mandatory to wear a seat belt in your car or risk your own neck.

## Are You an Open-plan Office Pest?

A survey conducted by a UK recruitment agency found that 40 percent or more workers considered changing jobs because of a colleague's irritating personal habits.

The magazine, *Computer Weekly*, went on to cite the top five irritants in the open-plan office as:

- Being emailed by people who sit a few metres away (85 percent).
- People who listen to voicemails on speaker phone (75 percent).
- People who swear at their computers (68 percent).
- Colleagues' choice of radio station (68 percent).
- Colleagues who don't share tea-making duties (60 percent).

### Other irritants include:

- Commenting on a colleague's private phone calls that you happen to be able to overhear.
- Breaking wind (in the open-plan office, this means instant ostracism. If this is a problem for you, get some charcoal tablets, fast).
- Interrupting other people's phone calls to make suggestions regarding a conversation that is, strictly speaking, none of your darn business.
- Talking or singing to yourself.

## ASK MH @T

### My back kills me at my desk. What can I do? – Vance

Recline your chair at intervals to relieve strain. Canadian researchers found that leaning back at 135 degrees (halfway between upright and lying flat) relieves back strain. Using body scans, scientists found that sitting upright caused the most strain. Leaning back aligns your vertebrae more comfortably.

Taking a walk once an hour for three to five minutes will relieve the strain on your butt and hips, says certified strength and conditioning specialist, Bill Hartman. This is where back pain often originates. You can target those areas directly with the following moves.

**1 Hip flexor** Kneel on your right knee, tighten your right buttock, reach up with your right arm and bend to the left. Do this for 20 seconds at least once to each side. "This counteracts the position of sitting, because it's the opposite activity – instead of having your hip bent, it's extended," Hartman says.

**2 Glute bridge** Lie on your back with knees bent, squeeze your buttocks together and lift your hips off the floor. Hold for five seconds and repeat 12 times. "By contracting the buttocks, you're stretching the front side of the hip," Hartman says.

