

Treading Softly

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NANCY PEARSON

When Nancy Pearson steps onto her treadmill, she sets the speed at 1 mph. Doesn't sound like much, does it? Not like it would make any kind of difference, you might be thinking.

But consider this: Pearson is on the machine every work day, pretty much all day long. While doing so, the director of marketing and communications for the theatre and dance department burns about 2,500 calories a week. Since she installed the treadmill in her office in the Paul Creative Arts Center, Pearson has lost a few pounds, her blood pressure has gone down and she reduced her body mass index (BMI) a half of point.

Equally important, she says, is that she hasn't gained any weight. Before coming to UNH in 2004, Pearson was a teacher and spent most of her time on her feet.

"I've been sitting for eight years now, and sitting takes years off your life," Pearson says.

After reading the research of Dr. James Levine of the Mayo Clinic, who literally wrote the book on how moving a little can make a big difference, Pearson decided she needed to find a way to get out from behind her desk.

After bringing the treadmill into her office last Mother's Day, Pearson contacted a former student with woodworking skills who took an old table and crafted it into a desk that's attached to the machine by clamps. He also made a shelf that holds her monitor and printer. The desktop has room for her keyboard and telephone.



"I'd been thinking about trying to work at my treadmill for a couple of years. When I started Googling treadmill desks, I found there's a whole world out there," Pearson says. It's true; an online search produced several versions, priced upwards of \$2,400.

While she works, Pearson can see how fast she is going and how many calories she's burning. Most of the time she keeps it set at 1 mph; sometimes, if she doesn't have to be writing, she'll bump it up to 1.2 mph.

Her office is in the bottom level of PCAC; one wall is glass. She used to run a spaceheater to keep warm. Now she often needs a fan.

"If I set the speed any higher, I'd get sweaty. But even at 1 mile per hour, I've noticed a change. Without changing my diet at all, all of my numbers—BMI, blood pressure—have gone down. But even if everything was staying the same, I still feel better not sitting behind a desk all day."

Since getting her treadmill desk, Pearson has launched an online community called WalkAtWork to evangelize about the benefits of the treadmill desk and to engage other users. Follow her on [Twitter](#) or on [Facebook](#).

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