

Why You Should Take Your Vacation Days

Source: [Telus Health](#)

When the eight-hour workday was established in the late 1800s, it was designed to organize workers' days into three periods: eight hours of work, eight hours of rest, eight hours of "what we will" (in other words, things you like to do). This ideal schedule has slowly morphed into much more work, much less rest, and – for most Canadians – very few hours spent doing what we love.

Taking a vacation – which doesn't necessarily have to be a trip – is an ideal antidote to the realities of modern life. Carving out time to rest, connect with loved ones and do things for pleasure can cultivate creativity, spark joy and generally allow us to disconnect from the stressors of daily life. And yet many of us aren't doing it.

In fact, 31 million vacation days are left unused by Canadians each year, according to Expedia's Vacation Deprivation Study. We are also only mandated to take just 10 vacation days annually, compared to many Europeans who are required to take 25 to 30!

As North Americans, we tend to live to work, rather than work to live, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when those of us who are fortunate to still have jobs may feel guilty or undeserving of taking a vacation right now – or just feel like there's no time. And since there's nowhere to go, we would be wise to save our vacation days for when we can travel again, right?

Wrong. We encourage you to take some time off from work this summer if you have the option. Here's why:

1. You need a break.

No matter how you have been personally affected by the coronavirus pandemic, you are most likely tired, stressed and emotionally burnt out. The last couple of months have also been busy for most Canadians, between juggling work or searching for work, childcare and household tasks, as well as the burden of staying up to date with the changing state of the world.

But while we often confuse stress with accomplishment, please repeat this to yourself: stress is not a badge of honour. Your health – both mental and physical – need attention, namely rest. If you feel guilty about this reality, try replacing the word "rest" with the more active synonym "recovery," as licensed social worker Melody Wilding recently told the Huffington Post.

2. It's linked to a number of health benefits.

Numerous studies have linked taking time off to a range of health benefits including reduced stress levels, stronger immune responses, better sleep and even a reduced risk of

heart disease. Can you think of a downside to taking vacation when it comes to your health and well-being? Probably not!

3. You'll do better work when you return.

Those who take vacations are more creative, more emotionally stable, more productive at work – and they actually take fewer sick days than their workaholic counterparts.

4. Your family and friends will benefit.

This may seem obvious, but taking time off from work restores our sense of wellbeing, which makes us better parents, roommates, family members and friends. In fact, a study by the Arizona Department of Health and Human Services revealed that women who take vacations are more satisfied with their marriages.

5. You'll reap benefits right away.

Studies show that the happiness surge we feel when booking time off can last for up to eight weeks leading up to the vacation. So do your future self a favour and book that summer vacation now.