

**At work,
you've got
to move it,
move it.**



Most of us already know sitting for extended periods isn't ideal for our health. But now, there's growing evidence suggesting it can increase your risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and death — even if you exercise regularly.

Plus, we know physical inactivity affects mental health too. Research has found inactive people have three times the rate of 'moderate to severe depression' compared to more active people. Evidence suggests that regular physical activity can reduce your risk of depression by up to 30%.

There are many other mental health benefits of being active too, including increasing self-esteem, reducing stress, and improving quality of life.

The lack of physical activity in the workplace also creates an economical challenge, as the cost of lost productivity rises, impacting businesses, the public health system and our society. In Australia, almost half (46.9%) of employed adults aged 18–64 years described their day at work as 'mostly sitting' (ABS 2022).

So, it pays to be aware of the possible adverse health effects for your staff, and to find ways to counter the danger.

Joint responsibility

If you're an employer, you have a responsibility to provide your staff with a risk-free, safe and healthy environment. And they have a responsibility to 'take reasonable care' of their own health and safety too.

So, what does this mean for workers who remain seated for extended periods?

Ideally, it's a collaborative approach, where you can promote regular breaks (when appropriate) and your employees can be proactive in requesting time for physical activity.



You, and other senior staff, can lead by example by displaying movement and non-sedentary behaviours.



Raising awareness about getting up and moving

To help lower the risk of chronic diseases among your employees, you can implement strategies that promote regular movement.



Address the issue - bring it up in meetings or put up posters explaining why regular movement is imperative for everyone's health.

Support a 'standing-friendly culture' - normalise standing through modelling. You, and other senior staff, can lead by example by displaying movement and non-sedentary behaviours.

Add it to the agenda - update meeting agendas to include some kind of standing item.

Stand and deliver - if you're delivering a meeting, encourage staff to stand and move around as an activity.

Walk the walk - you can incorporate walking meetings in small groups.

Review and revise - if possible, evaluate your employee's tasks to see if you can change their role in some way, to minimise sitting time for those who sit for long periods.

Stand-up desks - if feasible, provide stand-up workstations for those who are in mainly sedentary roles, or those returning to work who might be at risk of chronic disease.

Moving facilities - can you change the location of certain facilities, like printers, water coolers, recycling bins, to encourage workplace movement?

Group challenge

You could also get your team moving by setting up your own step challenge. Assure's [Movement Challenge](#) promotes health, boosts mental wellness, and powers connections among colleagues.

By creating a similar challenge, you can motivate your employees to move more, support each other, and improve their overall wellbeing.

You can find out about the positive impact Assure's Movement Challenge made in 2024, [here](#).

Walk somewhere to have lunch, or walk around the block.



Suggestions for your employees

Not everything needs to be formalised and official. Sometimes, your behaviour (modelling) and casual conversations can be a significant influence.

Here are a few tips for your colleagues.

- Instead of an internal message or email, can you walk over and visit that person?
- Swap the giant water bottle for a glass (more trips to the water source)
- Choose a bathroom that's further away
- Swap the lift for the stairs
- Park further away from work than you need to
- Walk somewhere to have lunch, or walk around the block

There are many more ways to encourage movement in the workplace, including exercises you can do at your desk (including 'desk and chair push-ups') so it's a matter of what works best for your employees.

The information contained in this article is for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended as health or medical advice. Always consult a physician or other qualified health provider regarding any questions you may have about a medical condition or health objectives.

Sources

- Benefits of Movement - Be Upstanding factsheet
- Movement is the best prescription for a healthy workforce | World Economic Forum
- Physical activity, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Moving more is good for our mental health, so what's stopping us? | Mental Health Foundation