

Sedentary behaviour factsheet

What is sedentary behaviour?

Sedentary behaviour in the workplace usually refers to long periods of sitting at work and/or during the journey to and from work. Sitting for long periods at work has become more common with the growth of technology and labour saving devices.

The effects of sedentary behaviour

A lot of attention has been given to the risks of injury caused by poor seated posture in the workplace but the health risks of sitting down for long periods are often overlooked. Even if you are meeting your daily 30 minutes of physical activity, long periods of sitting can increase your risk of heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.

- » Adults who sit less throughout the day have a lower risk of mortality – particularly from cardiovascular disease^{1,2}
- » Regardless of total sitting time, regular interruptions from sitting, even standing up, may reduce the risk of developing coronary artery disease and type 2 diabetes^{3,4}

What can we do about it?

Workplaces should not only focus on increasing physical activity amongst staff (see targeting physical inactivity factsheet), but also on reducing the time spent sitting. By interrupting sitting time with light-intensity activity (e.g. standing or casual walking), staff will gain significant health benefits.

Reducing sitting time could be actively promoted by:

- » Including long periods of sitting as a risk in occupational health and safety policies, just like other elements of ergonomics
- » Encouraging staff to get up for two minutes after half an hour of sitting, or at least for four minutes after every hour of sitting
- » Encouraging staff to walk to their colleagues and discuss work matters, rather than emailing or using the phone
- » Introducing height-adjustable sit stand workstations
- » Supporting walking meetings or providing meeting rooms with standing tables
- » Removing personal rubbish and recycling bins so workers must walk to a central bin
- » Refer to the Heart Foundation's *Sitting Less for Adults* resource for more information and ideas

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