



Safety Bulletin

Keep Active at Work

While you may have heard that sitting all day at work may be bad for your health, you may not realise that small and frequent changes from sitting and less time sitting in total can mitigate the potential harm.

Keeping active at work is best for your health

Prolonged unbroken sitting time is associated with a range of health problems including musculoskeletal disorders, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, some cancers and premature mortality.

How harm arises from sedentary work

The harm associated with prolonged occupational sitting is likely due to insufficient dynamic muscle activity, insufficient energy expenditure, insufficient movement, lack of postural variety, and diminished gravitational resistance.

What is considered excessive work related exposure?

Occupational sitting is common among workers, with one half of workers reporting sitting often or all of the time at work. Exposure to occupational sitting occurs across different industries and occupations.

There is no clear definition of excessive occupational sitting exposure. However, sitting for longer than 30 minutes without a mini-break, and sitting all day at work (being “too busy” to take a break) are likely to be detrimental to health. To date, assessment of occupational exposure has largely been focussed on office work environments, with limited evidence for exposure or interventions in non-office environments.

Ways to reduce prolonged sitting at work

A range of initiatives has been proposed to reduce prolonged sitting at work, including simple interventions that interrupt prolonged occupational sitting by substituting sitting with non-sedentary tasks, such as:

- Switching to work on a computer at a standing workstation
- Standing to read a document
- Having a standing or walking meeting
- Standing while talking on the phone
- Walking to deliver a message to a colleague rather than emailing

In essence, employers and workers should aim for small and frequent changes from sitting as much as possible and less time sitting in total.

Information from this article was sourced from Safe work Australia - [Sedentary Work - Evidence on an Emergent Work Health and Safety Issue](#).

