



**Australian Government**

**Comcare**

# BENEFITS OF MOVEMENT—BE UPSTANDING!

This factsheet provides an overview of the health risks associated with long periods of sitting, the benefits of regular movement, and strategies that persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) and workers can implement to reduce sitting time at work.

## THE BENEFITS OF SITTING LESS AND MOVING MORE

There is considerable evidence suggesting that prolonged sitting increases your risk of cancer<sup>i</sup>, cardiovascular disease and death<sup>ii</sup>. And the amount of time spent sitting remains a risk, even if you engage in regular exercise<sup>iii</sup>. Conversely, there are many benefits to sitting less and moving more, including:

- > reduced risk of chronic diseases, such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and type II diabetes
- > improved weight management
- > reduced risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE?

Under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) (WHS Act) both PCBUs and workers are responsible for ensuring health and safety in the workplace.

PCBUs have a duty of care under section 19 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of their workers while they are at work. PCBUs must provide and maintain a work environment that is healthy, safe and without risks to the health of workers, or other persons affected by the conduct of the business or undertaking.

Workers also have a responsibility under section 28 to take reasonable care for their own health and safety, and to comply with reasonable safety instructions. Workers should work with PCBUs to identify and control the risks associated with long periods of sitting and put in place measures to reduce associated risks.

## HEART FOUNDATION CONSUMER ADVICE

According to the National Heart Foundation of Australia<sup>iv</sup> ([www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)):

- > adults who engage in regular, planned exercise can still sit for long periods during the day, and therefore still need to consider ways of breaking up long periods of sitting
- > regardless of time spent sitting, regular breaks from sitting may help to reduce your risk of chronic diseases
- > workplaces should implement strategies to reduce sitting time and promote regular movement, thereby reducing the risk of chronic diseases for workers, and potentially reducing absenteeism and increasing staff participation.

## WHAT CAN WE DO IN THE WORKPLACE TO SIT LESS AND MOVE MORE?

### PCBUs

- > Incorporate measures promoting movement in workplace policies and procedures—for example, consider including the promotion of regular movement in your organisation's travel policy.
- > Raise awareness of the risks of sitting and measures to reduce sitting time throughout the organisation by discussing during office or team meetings, or toolbox talks and by displaying posters around the workplace.

- > Ensure a standing-friendly culture is promoted and supported. Modelling is one of the most powerful ways to affect change—if managers practice strategies to reduce sedentary behaviours, workers are much more likely to reduce their sedentary behaviour also.
- > Update meeting agenda templates to include a standing agenda item, and encourage staff to stand during meetings.
- > Encourage walking meetings between individuals or small groups.
- > Where possible, review and revise job and task design to minimise sitting time for sedentary workers.
- > Provide sit-to-stand workstations for workers in largely sedentary work roles or workers returning to work who may be at risk of chronic disease.
- > Locate facilities to encourage incidental movement. For example, by replacing individual workstation waste disposal units with a larger central unit, and moving printing and other facilities away from workstations.

### Workers

- > Use iMails—walk over and talk—instead of eMails to colleagues.
- > Use separately located bins and/or printers.
- > Dispose of waste and/or collect printing more frequently.
- > Drink more water so you have to go to the water cooler (and bathroom) more often.
- > Use a bathroom that is further away.
- > Step outside for fresh air.
- > Use the stairs instead of the lift.
- > Use an active way of commuting to work (walk or ride your bike, stand on the train, stand up to wait for your train/bus).
- > Park your car further away from work or park in short-term parking so you have to walk back to move your car.
- > Have lunch away from your desk.
- > Walk laps of the floor at regular intervals to break up the day.
- > Walk around the neighbourhood at lunch—you can develop two or three timed walking routes to fit into your working day and promote variety.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information please contact Comcare on 1300 366 979 or [ohs.help@comcare.gov.au](mailto:ohs.help@comcare.gov.au)

### DISCLAIMER

This fact sheet provides a basic and general overview of its subject matter only. It is not a substitute for independent legal advice and cannot be relied on as a statement of the law relating to the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth). Comcare recommends duty-holders obtain appropriate independent legal advice relevant to their particular needs and circumstances.

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- i Boyle, T., Fritschi, L., Heyworth, J., & Bull, F. (2010). Long-term sedentary work and the risk of subsite-specific colorectal cancer. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 173(10), 1183-1191.
  - ii Owen, N., Healy, G. N., Matthews, C. E., & Dunstan, D. (2010). Too much sitting: the population health science of sedentary behavior. *Exercise and sport sciences reviews*, 38(3), 105-113.
  - iii Katzmarzyk, P. T., Church, T. S., Craig, C. L., & Bouchard, C. (2009). Sitting time and mortality from all causes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 41(5), 419-429.
  - iv National Heart Foundation of Australia. (2011). Sitting less for adults. Retrieved from <http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/HW-PA-SittingLess-Adults.pdf>