

THE MOVEMENT MOVEMENT

Health & Productivity for Office Workers



The Movement Movement

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The Issue

Most office workers are sitting too much (often with poor posture), and it's as bad for your health as smoking is.

The Myth

“As long as I do exercise outside of work, I'll be ok?”
Wrong! Long periods of sitting at work are not undone by doing exercise afterwards.

The Solution

It's recommended you stand/move for at least two minutes every thirty minutes and ideally change posture regularly between standing and sitting.

The Challenge

Why don't
we move
enough at
work?

Most office workers know they should stand and move around more, but they don't! We've asked thousands of office workers why, and this is what we've heard...



"It's a
desk
job"



"I'm too
embarrassed"



"I'm
too
tired"



"I'm too
focused on
my work"

"It's a desk job"

So you have been provided with a sitting desk – that's what the job is. It's a sitting job. Right?

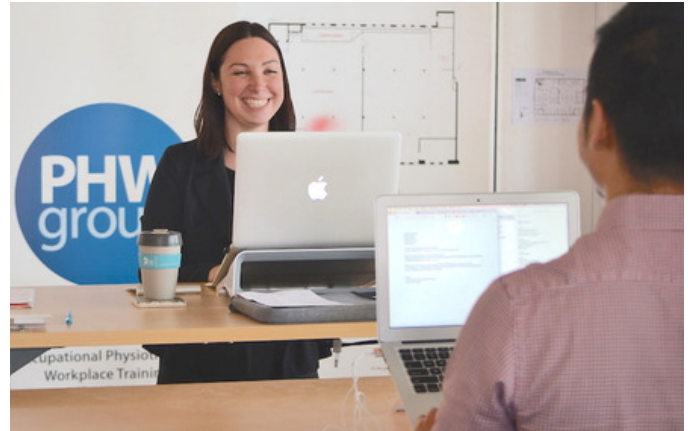
Not necessarily. It's just the norm.

Remember when smoking in restaurants was the norm? Things have changed. Maybe it's time to change your thinking about how you work?



Tip #1

Refresh your thinking about your "desk job"



1. Standing Meetings

Encourage standing meetings at work. You may get resistance about this, but persist and a tipping point will soon be reached. Alternatively, take the chairs out of the meeting spaces. Harsh? Trust me, many of your colleagues will be having the same thoughts. They just need someone to take the initiative.

2. Walking Meetings

Exercise, fresh air, new ideas... new perspectives. The logistics around noise and distraction can be easily overcome. Walk in pairs and share ideas until you get to a quiet spot and the ideas can be shared as a whole group.

3. Brainstorm with your Manager

Sit to stand work stations are cheaper and more versatile in design every day. They may be surprised to know what is out there. Other ideas such as daily stretch sessions and subtle office redesigns like moving printers to central locations also encourage movement.

4. Mix Sitting and Standing

Keep in mind that standing too long can also be problematic. The key is to vary your posture much as you would naturally do on a day off work. Ideally we are sitting for a while, standing for a while... sitting again... standing... walking... in a natural and healthy pattern.

"I'm too embarrassed"

So you know some groovy exercises that help keep you fit and well at work. But are you really going to do them?

What, here at work?! In front of everyone?

Will people stare at me and wonder what I'm doing and why?

Will it look like I'm not focused on my job?

No one else is doing exercise. I don't want to be the freak!



We can convince ourselves into unhealthy habits in a zillion ways. But by playing it safe socially who is really losing here?

Maybe it's time to think and act differently?



Tip #2

Be brave enough to exercise in the office

1. Assert your Healthy Choices

Be brave and exercise in the office occasionally. How would you feel if someone else stood up to do stretches? Would you judge them negatively? Or respect them for making exercise a priority and be keen to join them? If the latter, then how about being that brave person? What have you got to lose? Oh, that's right.... Your health!

2. Form an Exercise Gang

Get a group of 3-4 of you that can support each other to get up and immerse in the embarrassment together. Give yourselves a really daggy name like "The Movers and Groover's". Have a bit of fun with it.

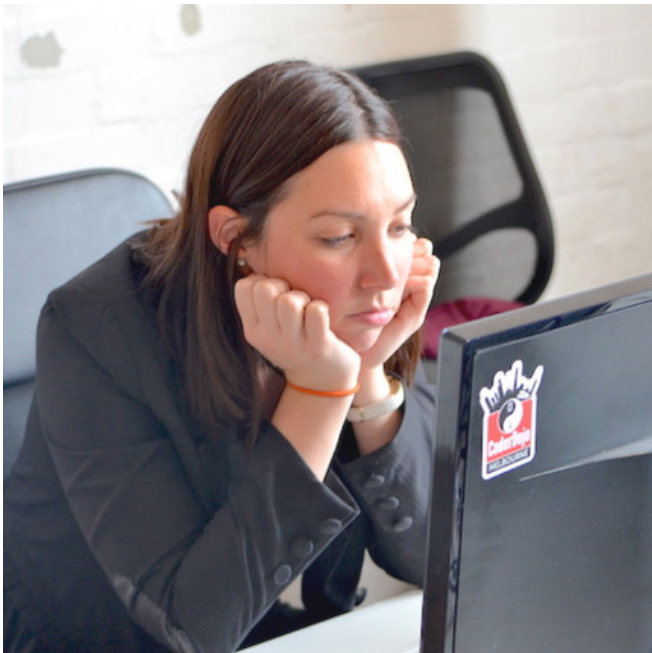
3. Get a Resistance Band

They are bright coloured (as shown in pics) and sit there reminding you to get up and stretch. Plus, they work muscles that can easily be neglected by long hours at the desk. PHW Group provide a "Posture correction pack" that includes a resistance band and can get you started.

"I'm too tired"

We all have our own special ways of not getting enough sleep.

Some have little ones whose cries for mummy and daddy break the silence of the night with the subtlety of a sledgehammer through glass. Some are workaholics staring at bright little screens into the wee hours. Others struggle to still their busy minds when the chance to sleep is there.



In all cases, being tired can be a factor in keeping us caught in our chairs for too long. Don't let yourself get caught in this vicious cycle.

Tip #3

Create more energy through activity

1. Reverse the Cycle of Fatigue

Fatigue leads to inertia, which leads to more fatigue. It's a vicious cycle. Getting up to move regularly can feel hard at first but it often helps to reverse that cycle and help create the energy you have been seeking.

2. Get a Movement Buddy

Team up with a friend at work who can be a "get up and move" buddy with you. Accountability and peer pressure can work in your favour.



3. Set a 2-Week Movement Project

Set yourself a two-week goal of getting up and moving at least every 30 mins. Be bigger and more determined than the forces of fatigue and see what happens. You might surprise yourself?! Just two weeks of a determined habit can help create a new norm.



4. Use Reminders

Use technology to help you to get up and move - on your phone, fit bit, calendar... Whatever works!

"I'm too focused on my work"

Our body is constantly communicating with us. If we sit too long it whispers to us, "Time to get up..."

If we ignore that it starts to shout... and the best way it knows how is through the experience of pain.

We get annoyed by pain, but pain is actually our friend. It is biologically trying to protect us. Mild pain can be very helpful and healthy for us if we listen to it and respond to it. But if we try to plug on and ignore it, or get in the habit of using pain killers, pain can progress from a helpful nagging to become a stronger, potentially life changing disability.



So are you really so invested in your work that it's worth not listening to your body? Really? Or is this just a crazy habit that we need to challenge?

Tip #4

Be body aware without losing productivity

Consider "how" you are working, not just "what" you are working on

We have discussed the importance of getting up for 2 minutes every 30 minutes. Imagine doing that while not losing an ounce of productivity. It's possible!

This is where there are great benefits to the sit to stand work stations and an environment that encourages movement. When they are well-designed and simple to use, a change of posture is available at the press of a button. Concentration on the task can be continued while you move easily from sitting to standing and vice versa.

Movement achieved, health promoted... productivity promoted.

Everyone's a winner.



But is it that simple?

In reality, some organisations invest heavily in the switch to sit to stand work stations and it's all exciting at first, but before long almost everyone is sitting again. Here we face the bigger challenge... Habit!

Tip #5

Create new healthy habits



Cross your arms in front of you, whichever way feels natural.

Now cross your arms the opposite way. Note how this feels.

Weird? Unnatural? Not your usual way?

So what made you start favouring the first way, anyway? It's not a dominant hand thing – half of the population favours dominant hand over non dominant, and half vice versa. It's just a habit. You started doing it one way when you were young. Then you repeated the habit thousands of times and the brain just started to lock it in as a habit.

Now picture yourself “working on a computer”. Picture yourself “at a desk”. Are you sitting or standing? Or able to do both? If you immediately thought sitting – why? Just a habit? The norm?

The brain is highly adaptable – when we let it be. So how do we move beyond the barriers of old habits and into a healthier and more productive way of office work? A good start is to set a goal.

Tip #6

Set goals towards Health and Productivity



To break out of unhealthy habits requires some accountability. So start now by setting yourself a **SMART** goal -

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Tangible

Example:

For the next two weeks I will not sit for longer than 30 mins at a time while working in the office.

For the month of November, I will ensure that I average at least 10,000 steps per day.

For the next three weeks, I will have my desk raised to standing height for one-third of the time I am at work.

Share the goal with people who can help keep you on track. A support network can really help.



Tip #7 Build a support network

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Achieving these goals will be a lot easier and more fun if you team up with work colleagues and/or family along the way.

There will be times when your energy flags, but you don't want to let your work buddy down. They may be thinking the same?

Also, timing how long you sit between standing breaks can be assisted by an annoying (yet lovely) work colleague who is nearby keeping an eye on you (in a nice way).



The Big Picture

Remember, ANY MOVEMENT is better than sitting for too long.

It can be, but doesn't have to be some expertly designed exercise program involving having your tail bone over your navel while waving like a gold cat at an Asian dumpling house.

ANY MOVEMENT!

It's achievable.

For most, only ourselves and our old habits are in the way.

Let's remind ourselves what is at stake.



What is at Stake anyway?

In case you need more motivation to make these positive changes we have discussed, consider what we know about sitting for too long.

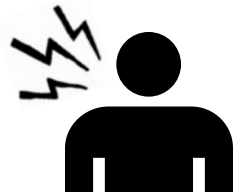


Shorter & less healthy life

Bang! Let's start with the big one. Sitting is being described as the new smoking because the effects on our cardiovascular system are very similar. Sitting is also associated with higher rates of bowel cancer and Type II Diabetes. None of this is really ideal, is it? But perhaps you need more motivation?

More aches & pain

Many of you have learned this the hard way. The evidence of this is weaker than the point above, but the link is there. Office workers are particularly at risk of neck aches and associated headaches if they don't consider their sitting postures and forget to get up from sitting.

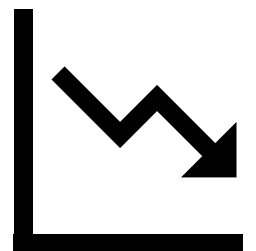


Slouched posture

You don't need research for this one. Look in the mirror next time you are texting on your mobile or on your laptop. We are creating a generation of slouched people who are posturally illiterate. Is it a good look? You be the judge.

Reduced productivity

Who needs a caffeine kick in the afternoon? Or starts watching the clock from 3pm? Who gets ansy and starts sitting on their legs in a bizarre cross legged yoga pose? Your body is talking to you, but are you listening? Change your position... exercise a little at work... stand up... we simply weren't designed to be chained to a chair. Office workers who adopt standing more at work often delight in the increased productivity and reduced fatigue that results from this, particularly in the afternoon.



Tip #8

Be ergonomically savvy

There are times when it's really good to sit. When you do, make sure you are set up well!

Get to know your chair



Many office workers have no idea how to adjust their chair. Is that you? You're not alone if so.

There may be one simple adjustment that you don't know about that will make a big difference. Here are a couple of common ones:

1. Ensure the recline angle of the chair encourages balanced posture. For most people doing computer work this is a backwards recline of 10-20 degrees. Not straight upright as the old thinking was.
2. Ensure the seat pan is the right depth for you. With your tail bone right back in the chair, you should have approximately 2-3 finger widths between the back of your knee and the front of the seat pan. A seat pan that is too large is a particular issue and it throws you into a slump posture very easily.

As a quick check – if you are sitting now, do you feel the back of the chair supporting your whole spine now? If yes, you are likely on the right track.

Some key Ergo tips



Sit within arms reach of your screen

It's really common for office workers to be too far away from their screens. This leads them to poke their heads forward to see the fine print. Neck tightness and headaches here we come.

Have good foot support

Can your legs reach the floor easily? Ideally yes. Or at least a good solid footrest is set up at the right height and position (this is plan B, being able to easily reach the floor with your feet is preferable).

Sit at a height that's comfortable for your shoulders

Ideally your shoulders should be sitting supported and comfortable, neither hunched upwards or rolled forwards. Prioritise sitting at the right height to make your shoulders and neck comfortable and supported.

Want to know more?

Consult with your manager for advice as there may be resources available that you don't yet know about.

If those resources don't help get in touch with PHW Group. Ergonomic assessments are a specialty of ours.

Tip #9

Prioritise your mental health

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There is more focus on this in workplaces now, and it's about time.

Our mind has layers of thought competing for attention in our subconscious at any given time. What do I need to finish by the end of the day? Will I get to school pick up in time at this rate? Why did Joe speak to me that way this morning, was he not happy with that report?...

Thoughts that involve fears/ threats tend to dominate and be allocated high priority in our minds. If we try to ignore these they can nag away at us and disrupt our ability to do our work in a productive and enjoyable manner.

Prolonged periods of anxious, stressful thoughts can have our body systems bathed in stress hormones associated with high alert states. This leads to poor concentration and potentially poor health. Most of us understand this. So what can we do?

Some key mental health strategies include:

1
**Learn to say
“no” when
you need to.**

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For many of us, this is the trickiest word in the dictionary. We may want to be “yes” people. We may want to please others. Many of us want to be liked, and to get good feedback for the hard work we do. This is all admirable. But among the yes's, there will need to be some no's in there too in order to be kind to yourself and (importantly) to the person making the request. A yes to them that you can't back up is no use to anyone.





Learn to
say "no"
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2 Confront stressful situations with bravery

The source of stressful situations we all face in office work and elsewhere varies. Time pressures, performance pressures, sales targets? One common example is a tense relationship between two work colleagues, combined with conflict avoidance.

Sometimes you just need to have the chat! It might be prickly. It might (and probably will) be uncomfortable at first. But it's so much better than the uncomfortable background niggle of a relationship that has turned sour.

Ideally have this chat directly with the person in a suitable environment and at a suitable time when you are both as grounded as possible. If that's not working, seek appropriate help and support from a manager/ HR rep. There is commonly great relief and improved mental health when these needed conversations eventually occur. Approach them with an open mind, empathy and respect.

Note: This area of our health is huge and deserves high priority. The advice above is simply a starting point. If you are suffering from low mood or any other mental health issues it's important you seek support from friends, family and health professionals as needed.

Ready to take the Next Steps?

Understanding all this in theory is one thing. Putting it into practice is another.

The first steps...

1. Print

Print the final page of this guide – place it in a prominent position in your office.

2. Share

Share this guide with people who will benefit from being healthier and more productive in the office.

3. Set a Goal

Set a health and productivity goal (tip 7) and share this goal with a support person (tip 8).

Taking it further...

4. Posture need improving?

Buy the posture correction pack from PHW Group or consult with a Physiotherapist.

5. Need expert Ergonomic advice?

You've taken on board the basic tips in this guide, but need further advice. Start with our Ergonomics DVD or contact us for advice.

6. Workplace Seminar?

One of our fun, practical and interactive seminars can help reinforce the “Movement Movement” message with your team.

7. Want to see a Health focused Office?

Come to our show case office in Richmond which includes six varieties of sit to stand work station to trial.

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PRODUCTIVE.HEALTHY.WORKPLACES

9 Top Tips

for Productive Healthy Office Work



1 Refresh your thinking about your “desk job”



2 Be brave enough to exercise in the office



3 Create more energy through activity



4 Be body aware without losing productivity



5 Create new healthy habits



6 Set goals towards Health and Productivity



7 Build a support network



8 Be ergonomically savvy



9 Prioritise your mental health