

Work Injuries

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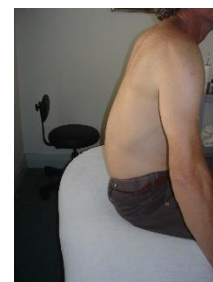
Too Much Sitting is Bad for your Health

There has been a lot of media attention lately about the health implications of prolonged sitting. Not only does this greatly contribute to back and neck pain. It is also strongly linked to a greater risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, stroke, weight-gain, and even certain cancers including breast cancer. One study found that people who sat for more than 11 hours a day had a 40% increased risk of dying within 3 years, compared to people who sat for less than 4 hours a day. There is data that suggests in many developed countries, the average adult spends 90% of their leisure time sitting. Australian adults are estimated to sit for around 9 hours a day.

Movement is important for circulation, because it is not just our heart that pumps blood around the body. Muscle contractions, particularly in our legs, play a crucial role in helping to keep the blood moving. This reduces stress on the heart, and helps to clear glucose and other chemicals in the bloodstream.

This knowledge is not new. In the early 1700's, Italian doctor Bernardino Ramazzini was advising sedentary workers to move for their health. He wrote "All sedentary workers ... suffer from the itch, are a bad colour, and in poor condition ... for when the body is not kept moving the blood becomes tainted, its waste matter lodges in the skin, and the condition of the whole body deteriorates." A 1950's study conducted in London transport workers found increased rates of heart-disease in seated versus standing workers. More recent studies have demonstrated greater risks for a wide range of conditions.

Prolonged sitting and computer work is usually the most significant cause of chronic neck and back pain. The pressure on the spine, as well as the flexed posture adopted, means that this is a major factor causing bulging discs in our backs. And the bent-over posture pushes our head and necks into an extreme curve, causing pressures that can lead to neck pain, headaches and chronic muscle tension.



Slowly but surely, the push is coming to enable office-workers to stand more at work. Stations that allow workers to easily alternate between sitting and standing are becoming more popular. The reality is that they will eventually become mandatory in many work places.

A desk that adjusts from sitting to standing height is one option. However there are now clever desk-mounted devices available that support the work-station, and can be adjusted within a matter of seconds. Links to two such devices are provided below:



<http://www.ergodesktop.com/content/kangaroo-elite>

<http://au.varidesk.com/>

While we are awake, our body's like to keep moving. So prolonged standing is not the answer either. Most experts recommend alternating between 30 minutes sitting and standing, and repeating this throughout the day. With a little practice, this can become quite comfortable.

There are other strategies you can employ to help overcome the perils of prolonged sitting:

- Encourage staff to stand intermittently during work meetings.
- Stand up while you're talking on the phone.
- Every 30-60 minutes get up for a drink of water.
- Stand-up on public transport.
- On long drives, stop and have a brief walk every 1-2 hours.
- Move your legs regularly while sitting – up and down on your toes, and alternatively bending and straightening your knees.
- Perform postural exercises for your spine, such as chin tucks, thoracic rotations, and pelvic tilting. Your physiotherapist can give you good advice on this.

References:

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7. Ramazzini. B (1700). http://todayinsci.com/R/Ramazzini_Bernardino/RamazziniBernardino-Quotations.htm.
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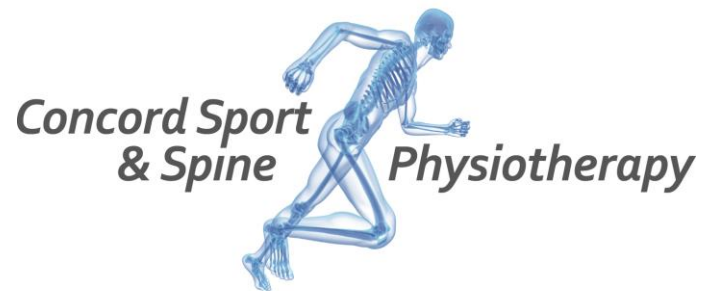
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