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Safety Shorts

JANUARY 2015

Sit, Stand, MOVE!

Have you heard the growing buzz in your workplace? Physical inactivity is the biggest public health crisis of the 21st century. In fact, even sitting at your desk all day is bad for you! At CIS we've noticed increasing urgency among some of our members to find various ergonomic solutions to deal head-on with this somber warning against sitting too long at work. Many are purchasing sit-stand workstations, and a few are seriously looking at replacing traditional workstations with bicycle, balance ball, and treadmill workstations.

What is at the root of all this excitement?

It's research that seems to indicate that prolonged sitting is associated with bad health outcomes ... like cardiovascular disease, the #1 killer in the U.S. The real bummer is that prolonged sitting is physiologically harmful, even if you are otherwise a physically active person.

But does the research support these alternative workstations? The truth is there is no concrete research that supports that these various types of trendy move-while-you-work workstations effectively counteract the deadly effects of sitting too long day after

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WHY STAND?

- Increases blood flow
- Reduces the likelihood of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)
- Burns calories
- Offers a break from sitting, reducing the static load
- Refreshes and re-energizes
- Offers biomechanical benefits, including improvement of metabolic function after eating

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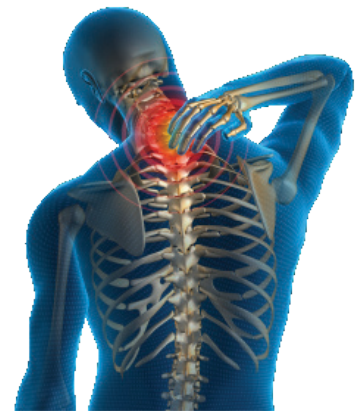
day. And we know even less about the effects of over-correction and unintended consequences – like overworking the same leg muscles pedaling day after day, or missing a beat and falling off the moving treadmill. Clearly more research is needed before we replace all of our workstations with moving ones.

So what to do in the meantime?

It's really simple. If we are sitting too much and moving too little, we should get up and move more. Getting up and moving more doesn't have to cost anything – you don't need to purchase expensive alternative workstations to enable employees to get up and move. What is needed are reminders cues and encouragement to not sit too long without doing some stretching or getting up and moving around!

One practical idea that came out of a rural municipality located in Northern Maine was to adopt a policy and distribute posters to encourage employees to increase their activity by getting up and moving throughout the day. The town developed a policy of “Sit for 60, Move for 3.” They distributed posters that warned about sitting too long and offered creative ideas on how to use the 3 minutes per hour. The cost was minimal compared to the cost of purchasing and maintaining moving equipment, and nearly 30 percent of the employees reported following the advice!

So rather than furiously replace existing workstations with sit-stand equipment or moving workstations, how about starting with a policy and encouragement for those who sit all day? Suggest that they regularly get up and move – stand up, stretch, walk to the water fountain, climb a flight of stairs, or even go and talk with a co-worker in person instead of on email or by phone? Work with your safety/wellness committee to develop a way to remind and support your employees to increase their activities throughout the day.



STRAINED NECK?

If most of your sitting occurs at a desk at work, be sure to have your chair adjusted to be ergonomically correct. Avoid craning your neck forward toward a keyboard or tilting your head to cradle a phone while typing.