

## Sit-Stand Desks Suggested Guidelines

**Please note:** this document is not meant to be a literature review of the risk of sedentary behavior (i.e. sitting) in the workplace or act as a prescriptive statement for people to stand while they work. The purpose of this document is to raise the awareness of the importance of reducing how much we are sitting during the workday as well as provide some guidance to staff and managers who would like to use a sit-stand desk in the workplace.

### Background

#### Results of SHR Healthy Workplace Evaluation

In 2013-2014 the Health Promotion Department (HPD) in Population and Public Health (PPH) received funding from the Community Initiatives Fund to do a Saskatoon Health Region Healthy Workplace Evaluation project. The physical activity [results](#) revealed that the majority of participants (SHR employees) spent more than 5 hours/day sedentary. There also was a significant mismatch between self-reported and accelerometer measured sedentary behavior. Many employees were surprised when they received their accelerometer results and realized how sedentary they actually were during the workday.

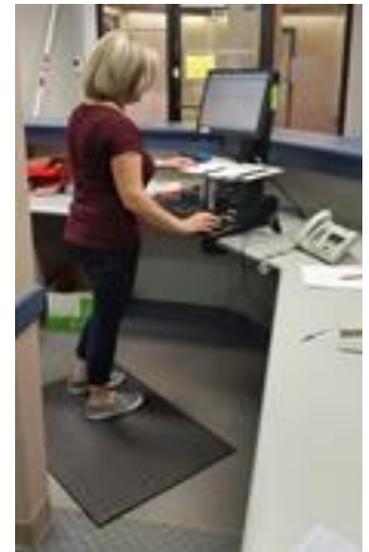
#### Developing Evidence

In the past five years, there has been an accumulating amount of research on the harmful effects of sedentary time in the work setting. A multitude of health risks may be connected to “prolonged” and “excessive” sitting during the workday (ref. Biswas, 2015). In general, the concept of reducing how much we sit during the work day has been accepted. However standing all day comes with its risks as well and isn’t practical. This resource will help provide a bit of guidance to transition to using a sit-stand desk and to increase your standing time during the work day.

Many workplaces deal with musculoskeletal strains of their staff and sitting too long with poor posture is the most common cause (ref. Soltanoff, 2014). Even if an employee achieves the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines (150 minutes of moderate-vigorous physical activity each week), being sedentary at work for most of the day negates the benefits gained (ref. Brittany et al., 2015). In this systematic review, Canadian researchers have found that “active desks” (i.e. sit-stand and/or treadmill desks):

- reduced sedentariness
- improved mood without introducing too many workflow complications
- people using active desks have less fatigue, tension and more focus.

Providing options for staff to reduce their sedentary time at work is important for supporting the overall health of the employee.



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### Recommendations from Conference Board of Canada

The Conference Board of Canada's publication *Moving Ahead. Workplace Interventions to Reduce Physical Inactivity and Sedentary Behavior* states "employers should focus not only on increasing physical activity levels among their employees, but also on reducing sitting time, especially at work. Ways to actively reduce prolonged sitting":

- Encourage employees to get up every 30 minutes for 2 minutes or at least every hour for 2 to 4 minutes
- Introduce height-adjustable desks to promote standing
- Promote standing or walking meetings and provide meeting space that enables this behavior
- Introduce two-minute stretch breaks every 30 minutes during meetings
- Provide extra-long telephone cords or headsets so that employees can stand during phone calls

### Expert statement commissioned by Public Health England

*The sedentary office: a growing case for change towards better health and productivity. Expert statement commissioned by Public Health England and the Active Working Community Interest Company* is the first set of guidelines and recommendations that have been made about using sit-stand desks.



Published by **BMJ**

Commissioned by **Public Health England**

**Experts publish workplace recommendations on sitting**

- New recommendations for employers to reduce prolonged periods of sedentary work.
- Accumulate **two hours** of standing and/or light activity daily during working hours. Eventually progressing to **four**.
- Break up seated work with standing work . Regularly.
- Avoid prolonged static sitting (and prolonged static standing).
- Employers should promote reduction of prolonged sitting alongside other health promotion goals.

**MORE INFO** ▶

We strongly encourage

1. Transition through cycles of sitting-standing-walking around throughout the day (standing in one spot all day is not recommended)
2. The use of an anti-fatigue mat
3. Gradually progressing the length of how long you are standing each time
4. Wearing supportive footwear
5. Have good [posture](#) while standing while you work
6. Stretch frequently throughout your day – it does not need to take long bouts of time
  - Stand and stretch while reading a document or talking on the phone
  - Stretch during long meetings
  - Do side bends when you are making photocopies
  - Stretch while sitting at your desk

### Saskatoon Health Region *Healthy Workplace Initiative* Stretching Resources

- [Stretch At Your Desk](#)
- [A Moment To Stretch Video](#)
- [A Moment To Stretch Video \(Standing\)](#)

More at [www.shrhealthyworkplace.ca](http://www.shrhealthyworkplace.ca)

# SHR Employees Feedback RE: Sit-Stand Desks

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## Healthy Workplace Initiative Sit-Stand Desk Pilot Project

The overall intent of this project is to encourage and promote more active work environments which include a reduction of sedentary behaviour by providing interested units and departments within SHR with the opportunity to trial a moveable sit-stand desk. This pilot is preventative and proactive in focus, encouraging staff to establish healthy habits before they are injured or require accommodation.

The specific goals of the project are to:

1. Encourage conversation about how to have a more active work environment with less sedentary behavior
2. Provide an opportunity for interested units to trial the sit-stand desk at no cost
3. Make available reliable sources of information and resources to assist in decision making

Feedback gathered from participants in the project helps us to identify barriers and challenges as well as benefits. It is used to improve Healthy Workplace programming and initiatives. Participants have shared the following:

- I call it the “fountain of youth”! I find that my overall sense of wellbeing at work has really increased. I also find that the usual decrease of energy in mid-afternoon is non-existent!
- Love it!
- Love it. I suffer from tension headaches as a result of a neck injury as well as a couple of other issues that are exacerbated (or were caused by) by long periods at a desk (which my job requires 98% of the time). Being able to stand has already made a huge difference physically, and has greatly reduced the time/money spent on referred massages and chiropractic treatments of these ailments. Additionally, I also find that I am more alert and productive, especially during those slumpy parts of the day i.e. after lunch.
- Experienced a back injury at home so I have been using physio, massage, chiropractor and exercise therapy to recover and strengthen my core and lower back. I use it every day for the majority of my day. I use it for all email reading and the majority of my computer work. My lower back pain has decreased considerably since it was installed. I have also been more conscious to take walking and stretching breaks and I feel so much better.
- Sometimes it is easier to think when I am sitting down (especially if I am reading something difficult) but standing has become my default position.

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