



# Move More at Work & Sit Less Occupational Health Tool Kit





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# Report on Evidence

## Occupational Sitting and Health

Scientists are calling for a paradigm shift in relation to physical activity promotion.

The traditional focus of encouraging people to increase their moderate and vigorous physical activity, as the dominant format of health-related human movement, may not create the return on investment once thought (Katzmarzyk et al.).

Although the current recommendations for physical activity are well supported, new evidence has emerged that has shifted the scientific community's thinking about sedentary behaviour. Research has shown that sedentary behaviour has its own independent and unique effects on human metabolism, physical function and health outcomes (Tremblay, et al.). These outcomes are dissimilar from the biology of exercising. Thus, researchers are now suggesting that sedentary physiology be introduced as its own distinct and separate field of study, from that of exercise physiology.

### Sedentary Behaviour Defined

For the purpose of this paper, it would be prudent to define sedentary behaviour. The old definition, via exercise physiology, would be conceptualized by being at the low end of the physical activity continuum (Figure 1) or the lack of being moderately or vigorously physically active (Tremblay et al.). However, a new, definitive definition has emerged in the literature:

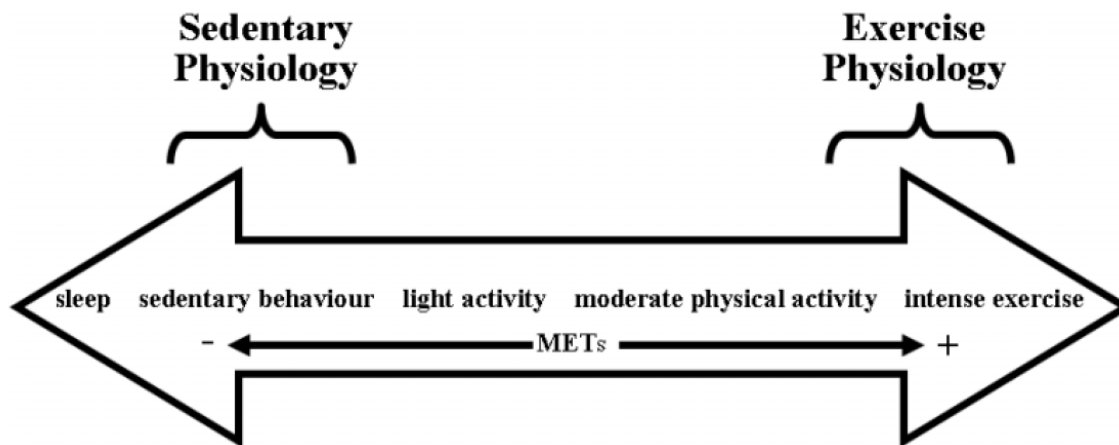
- sitting or lying down
- awake
- an energy expenditure of no more than 1.0 or 1.5 METs (multiples of the basal metabolic rate) (Owen, Tremblay, Hamilton, Bauman)

“This definition corresponds to activities undertaken while sitting, such as watching TV; of importance, any standing activity (unless absolutely still) is classified as non-sedentary behaviour” (Yates et al.).

MET is the measurement used to quantify energy expenditure. For comparison to the MET value of sedentary behaviour, MET values of other activities are listed here (Tremblay et al.):

- 1 MET = the resting metabolic rate
- 2.9 METs = behaviours performed while standing
- 3-4 METs = moderate paced walking
- 8 METs = running

Figure 1: The Physical Activity Continuum (Tremblay et al.)



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## Sedentary Physiology

Laboratory animal studies have demonstrated qualitative differences in biological processes when activity or inactivity is imposed.

*“Chronic unbroken periods of muscular unloading, associated with prolonged sedentary time, may have deleterious biological consequences. Physiologically, it has been suggested that the loss of local contractile stimulation induced through sitting leads to both the suppression of skeletal muscle lipoprotein lipase (LPL) activity and reduced glucose uptake” (Owen et al.).*

This effect of lowered levels of LPL was a significant finding. These lowered levels were prominently noted in the quadriceps, a muscle used for postural support. LPL is essential for triglyceride uptake along with the production of high density lipoproteins (HDL). Thus, a decrease in circulating LPL results in less fat being captured in the blood and burned in the muscle, and less HDL production; two metabolites related to cardiovascular risk (Hamilton et al.).

This discovery has led researchers to question the current guidelines for physical activity. If the population is spending most of its day sitting, then would the current guideline of 150 minutes a week, of moderate to vigorous Physical Activity produce the needed health effects?

Interestingly, scientists argue, that if physical inactivity is equated to a lack of meeting physical activity guidelines, then one would expect that exercise would reverse the deleterious effects of inactivity (increased LPL levels and HDL production). However, studies in rats have not demonstrated this result. Instead, when sedentary rats are exercised, LPL levels do not change (in the postural muscles). Only some increase in LPL can be realized if the rats were intensely trained (a few hours

per day of intense sprinting) and only in the muscles not typically used for standing or light movements (i.e. not the quadriceps or soleus) (Hamilton et al.).

In addition to the above findings, sitting or sedentary behaviour has also been found to have a significant relationship to type 2 diabetes, and all cause and cardiovascular disease (CVD) related mortality. There is mixed evidence in relation to overweight and obesity. (Thorp, Proper).

Therefore, activity that interferes with standing (sitting) has potent effects on LPL and HDL production. This discovery creates implications for the public's health when addressing health via physical activity. As Hamilton states "What should the person who sleeps an average of 8 hours per day, be doing for the remaining 15.5 hours of the day that they are not exercising?"

### **Who's sitting?**

- On average, participants across countries reported sitting 3 to 8 hours every day. Global economic development, mechanization and computerization, electronic entertainment and increasing use of motorized transport have all increased sitting time (Bauman et al.).
- In the Americas, where there has been a shift in lifestyles and technological advances, individuals of all ages are reported to be spending 7.7 hours or 55% of their day, in sedentary behaviour. (Swartz et al.).
- Canadian adults are reported to spend an average of 9.5 hours a day in sedentary pursuits, or approximately 69% of their waking hours (Statistics Canada, Health).
- In Halton, 217,350 residents aged 15+ worked full time in 2010. This represents 77% of the labour force. Of these full time workers, 61% work in office related occupations (i.e., management, business, finance and administration, education, law and social, community and government services) (Statistics Canada, National).
- In Halton, 207,265 of the employed population in 2010 aged 15 years and over, with a usual place of work or no fixed workplace address, arrived to and from work via a motorized vehicle. These same respondents reported a median commuting duration of 25.6 minutes one way (Statistics Canada, National).
- Respondents to the 2003 RRFSS survey reported they sat an average of 5.3 hours per day (Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System).

### **Who's Active?**

- About 15% of Canadian adults are reported to meet the new physical activity guidelines, with a larger proportion of men (17%) meeting the guidelines more than women (14%). The majority spend most of their waking hours in sedentary pursuits (Statistics Canada, Health).
- Overall, it was reported that about one-half (53%) of adults accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) one or more days a week, but this means that almost as many (47%) did so less than one day a week (Statistics Canada, Health).
- In 2011, it was reported that 57% of Halton adults aged 18-69 were classified as having a high level of physical activity, 29% with a moderate level of physical activity and 14% with a low level of physical activity (Halton Region Health Department).
- In 2011, it was reported that the percentage of Halton adults aged 18-69, who rated low in activity was 14%. This was statistically significant in comparison to the Ontario average of 18% (Halton Region Health Department).

## The Active Couch Potato Phenomenon

Research has proposed, with all the inactivity from sitting, the benefits derived from meeting the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines are challenged. The activity presented in the guidelines is beneficial, this is well supported in the research, but if the rest of the waking day is spent sedentary, these benefits may be erased (Hamilton et al.).

Tremblay et al., describes the Active Couch Potato as the person who has high volumes of sedentary time, with a mid-day spike in physical activity. For example, this person's average day might unfold as such: drives to work, sits at work, engages in a half hour/hour walk or workout after lunch, returns to their desk to sit, drives home and continues to sit at home in the evening.

When considering the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, this person's average day of activity would be deemed to have met the daily requirements. However, on closer inspection the amount of time spent sedentary (sitting) is significant and when considering the research, detrimental to health.

## Opportunities

Since the statistics presented earlier in this document demonstrate a high level of sedentary time in the adult population, the workplace is a prime location for intervention.

Research has been conducted to examine the association between interrupted sedentary time and its effects on metabolic markers (glucose levels and triglycerides). The results found, the more often sedentary time was interrupted (standing –up or walking) the better the metabolic health (Swartz, Hamilton). Thus, the simple act of standing or walking leads to better health.

All researchers agree, at a population level, more studies need to be conducted to understand how to address sedentary behaviour. However, in the meantime there is a strong call to act sooner than later.

Some recommendations on how to move forward have been made in the literature. They include the following:

### Population level:

- Implementation of public information campaigns promoting a reduction in sitting time (in addition to the message of increasing physical activity) (Owen et al.).
- Creation of adult guidelines for sitting time (or sedentary time) (Bauman et al.)(Note from Author: the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology does not have plans, at present, to create Canadian (adult) sedentary guidelines).

### Organizational Level:

- Adoption of innovative technologies in the workplace such as height-adjustable desks and treadmill workstations (Dinesh, Healy, Owen).
- Formation of new regulations in the workplace that reduce or break-up sitting time (Owen, Healy). Research has suggested a 5 minute walking break every hour (Swartz et al.). Other ideas include email prompts sent to employees to provide a cue to take a walking break (Bennie, et al.), auditory reminders like an alarm on the computer and/or computer programs

that lock-out the user (at specific times of the day) forcing them to break from their work(Gilson et al.).

- Promotion of employees to use the stairs (Gilson et al.).
- Employment of environmental changes and work practices by: moving printers off desks, locating bins and recycling containers away from desks, using a washroom on another floor, standing when making telephone calls, standing at meetings, walking over to a colleagues desk to talk (instead of telephoning or emailing them), walking a distance for coffee and walking at breaks (Gilson et al.).
- Promotion of active transportation to and from work. Organizations should provide the infrastructure to support this, such as: bike racks, change rooms and showers etc. (Owen, Gilson, Bennie).
- Creation of walking groups (Gilson).
- Provision of non-sitting alternatives at events (Owen et al.).
- Alteration of the workplace's built design: from closed office and non-adjustable work stations to open office with adjustable workstations (Healy et al.).

## **Conclusion**

The evidence is clear; sedentary time needs to be addressed, and there is an opportunity to transform the current work environment. As Hamilton et al. states, "This new perspective on deleterious health consequences of too much sitting should be seen as being additional to, and not as an alternative to, the well-recognized benefits of participation in health- enhancing moderate-intensity physical activity."

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# Move More at Work & Sit Less: Occupational Sitting and Health Sample Business Case

## 1.0 Introduction/ Background

In the fight against preventable chronic diseases, experts in the field have identified personal physical activity levels as a key ingredient towards optimum health.

An emerging issue in the area of physical activity promotion is the impact of sedentary behaviour on health. Public health has paid a great deal of attention to promoting the benefits of physical activity; however the negative consequences of sedentary behaviour have not been as fully explored. Sedentary behaviour, the opposite of physical activity, deserves equal and effective modes of intervention to ensure a comprehensive approach to health promotion. The recognition of the consequences of inactivity could be the simple impetus needed to engage reluctant adopters of the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

Workplaces provide a unique opportunity to positively affect the health of adults through anti-sedentary promotions, activities, and policies. This is particularly true for organizations that employ a large number of knowledge workers- staff that spend seven or more hours a day at a desk or meeting table. This is the target group who needs to realize the health costs of their sedentary time and need the opportunity to engage in innovative practices that can curb the problem.

It is well documented in the literature that the adoption of workplace health strategies saves organizations money by lowering health care costs and increasing employee performance. (Personal Best, (2009). Wellness @ Work: Healthy Results for People and Businesses and How Your Company Can Benefit Too. p.4-17)

Workforces that are serious about the health of their employees should pay attention to how much inactivity their workers are engaged in while creating a multitude of opportunities to positively affect their health.

## 2.0 Business Objectives:

Write your overall goal and then pick as many objectives as you like. Alternatively you can rewrite the samples below so they fit your organization's unique situation and needs.

Goal: Create a work environment which optimizes health.

## Objectives:

1. By *insert date here*, have implemented an awareness campaign to trigger employees to think about how much they are sitting while at work.
2. By *insert date here*, have implement an educational campaign (follows the awareness campaign) on how to reduce your sitting time while at work.
3. By *insert date here*, have performed a review of potential options that will create a supportive environment for the employee to sit less and move more.
4. By *insert date here*, have incorporated the options into the work environment/practices, so the employee can sit less and move more.
5. By *insert date here*, have formulated a method of evaluating the incorporated options in the work environment/practices.
6. By *insert date here*, have implemented the evaluation and reported on the results.

## 3.0 Current Situation and Problem/Opportunity Statement

### CURRENT SITUATION:

Place information about your company here.

Below is a written example with Halton Region as the organization.

Halton Region employs 2531 persons with the largest population (533 employees) working at the Administrative Office (1151 Bronte Road). Because of this, there is a unique opportunity to positively affect the health of a number of adults via anti-sedentary promotions/activities. This is particularly true at 1151 Bronte Road, as it is the largest Regional office, with at least 90% employed as knowledge workers, resulting in staff that spend 7 + hours a day at a desk or meeting table.

Tie the project to any corporate strategic plans, missions or vision statements.

Workplace health initiatives certainly help to meet the Region's Citizens' Priorities Action Plan 2011-2014: Administration and Finance Section: Be an Employer of Choice. With the adoption of new innovative devices, persons looking for employment could be drawn to the progressive stance of the organization, since it exhibits efforts to maintain or increase the health of its workforce.

### OPPORTUNIY STATEMENT

Use your own company information here highlighting the opportunity that exists to positively affect the health of the employees.

Given the following Halton Region statistics:

- 2531 employees across the Region
- 533 in one location (Bronte Rd.) allowing a good sample group to test innovative ideas
- 89% of the workforce is between the ages of 30 to 50 + (a time when the results of personal lifestyle choices and behaviours start to exhibit themselves via ones' health)

- 69% of the workforce is female (females tend to gravitate towards knowledge work, versus manual labour, thus one can hypothesize a majority of the workforce is sitting- (Note: actual stats- knowledge: labour workforce not available from HR)

There exists an opportunity to positively affect the health of the organization by implementing new innovative designs such as sit-to-stand workstations, treadmill workstations and other equipment and in creating supportive policies that allow the employee to get out of their chair.

Then propose/outline how the opportunity would be organized.

To introduce a change in workplace design, a pilot project involving two to three departments could be planned and would involve the following:

- A proper project management plan that includes risk mitigation for possible barriers to implementation (cost, health safety concerns/issues, maintenance of equipment, sustainability of product, accessibility and effects on staff productivity)
- A comprehensive health promotion approach that includes the following strategies, creating supportive environments, education and awareness and healthy public policy
- A communication plan
- The establishment of an internal steering committee
- An evaluation plan

## 4.0 Critical Assumptions and Constraints

List here any assumptions that are made along with any constraints the opportunity may encounter.

### Assumptions

- Workforce feels there needs to be intervention in this area (sitting).
- Workforce and management are receptive to new innovated ideas for increasing physical activity in the workplace.
- There is a budget available for implementing new innovation ideas.
- Staff are available to work on a pilot project.

### Constraints

- Individual work styles and the reluctance to take a break from the work.
- Negative response from management around worries about employee productivity while using the new innovated desk designs or adopting various activity strategies.
- Organizational culture and attitude towards physical activity options for employees- reactive and not proactive, therefore if there is not a demonstrated need (i.e. poor employee health attributed to sitting) then the option would not been deemed worthwhile.
- Environmental barriers: Lack of space, noise from the equipment.
- Cost Barriers: sit-to-stand desks or treadmill desks seen as an added cost.
- Health and Safety concerns may impede certain individuals from taking part.

## 5.0 Analysis of Options and Recommendations

See lists below as an example for this section

### The literature recommends the following MACRO options: (innovations at multiple levels)

- Public information campaigns.
- Innovative technologies to reduce sitting time ( sit-to-stand desks, or new regulations in the workplace to reduce or break-up extended periods of job-related sitting- ideally the employee should move every hour for at least five minutes).
- Active transportation to work opportunities (i.e. walking, biking or using transit to work instead of the car).
- Evaluations of interventions re: satisfaction and impact.

### Other ideas from the literature MICRO

- Prompts/cues for interrupting sitting time: programmed into the computer and activated as an alarm to remind and encourage activity, email prompts etc.
- Computer programs that lock users out to encourage breaks- mixed reaction to this approach.
- Prompts to use the stairs.
- Printers located in central area away from desks.
- Recycling bins and garbage bins away from individual desks.
- Going to another floor to use the washroom.
- Walking a distance to get coffee/tea/food.
- Standing to take telephone calls/emails.
- Walking during breaks.
- Standing desks or sit-to-stand desks.
- Free structured programming-yoga, Zumba, Pilates.
- Free, on-site, gym memberships.

### Other

- Treadmill Desks
- Overall general **best practices** towards increasing physical activity in the workplace: according to the Center for Disease Control in the US, there are two initiatives considered to be best practice for physical activity promotion in the workplace a) creation of or enhanced access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach activities and b) point-of-decision prompts to encourage use of stairs. Thus, any efforts to decrease sitting time (sedentary) with physical activity would rank as a best practice under initiative a). See link for more information [www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/environmental-policy/index.html](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/environmental-policy/index.html).

## RECOMMENDATIONS: These are the options

1. Do nothing- results in no capital cost/human resource cost, but, will it cost more in the long run if nothing is done now?
2. Pilot testing of new options: secure budget, create project plan, implement and evaluate.
3. Consider the creation of a corporate Move More policy. This could be the first step towards creating a healthier workplace and would provide direction and impetus to do so. Small projects, like the one proposed here, would then have the 'necessary teeth' for approval and budget allocation.

## 6.0 Preliminary Project Requirements

- Staff time and commitment to the development and implementation of the project plan.
- Budget allotment to include the purchasing or leasing of innovative design options (treadmill desks, standing desk).

## 7.0 Budget Estimate and Financial Analysis: (Rough Estimate)

Add in here any costs that would pertain to your organization's implementation of the opportunity/project

Innovative ideas are the focus of this business case; however, a wide variety of options (those already in situ) would be connected to the overall plan for promotion

ITEM	COST in Ranges (Canadian dollars)
Treadmill Desk	\$1000 - \$4000
Sit to Standing Work Station	\$800 - \$1500

**Note:** Costs are a result of an internet search. Project plan would include a search and cost comparison of a number of companies. Warranty would also be considered when choosing best option for Halton. Alternatively, Facilities may have a preferred version due to their expertise in the area. Also, costs are for the product only and do not include any set-up or wiring of the workstation.

## 8.0 Schedule Estimate

Once the business case has been accepted, a proper project plan would be developed which would include a project schedule.

## 9.0 Potential Risks

Write in all risks that would pertain to your work environment and organization.

1. Health and Safety Concerns: potential for injury from using the equipment
2. Loss of work time because of an injured employee

3. Risk of success: resulting in demand for innovative product(s)

## 10.0 Exhibits

Add in any other information, not already provided, that will help support your business case.

A) Halton Region Health Department document: Occupational Health and Sitting: Report on the Evidence [www.halton.ca/common/pages/UserFile.aspx?fileId=117895](http://www.halton.ca/common/pages/UserFile.aspx?fileId=117895)

B) Steps to Creating a Healthier Organization Toolkit:

[www.halton.ca/common/pages/UserFile.aspx?fileId=21538](http://www.halton.ca/common/pages/UserFile.aspx?fileId=21538)

Halton Region's own toolkit, access via link above, identifies three domains (physical environment, organizational culture and individual practices) as the gold standard for workplace health initiatives. The proposed pilot project of addressing sedentary behaviour dovetails with these three domains. Utilizing project management methodology will allow the development of a detailed project plan, ensuring deliverables in all three domains, and resulting in a comprehensive approach to the issue of a sitting workforce.

## How to Get Started:

1. Review the business case and consider using with your organization. Will the sample template work? If it does, populate the template with your organization's information. If the template does not work- reformat the information to fit with your organization's preferred template.
2. Once your business case is complete, approach your Human Resources (HR) Department or Occupational Health and Safety Office and present the business case along with the Move More at Work & Sit Less power point presentation. Look for champions who can help create buy-in with senior management or HR. Request a follow-up meeting after the presentation and discussion.
3. If there is a champion, connect with them to discuss the opportunities that are available in the organization and how best to move an initiative forward.
4. If able, strike a committee or approach an existing committee to help with the work of getting people to address their sitting at work. Persons to invite to your committee are HR staff, Occupational Health and Safety, senior management, facilities staff, a wellness committee member (if applicable), and any interested staff willing to devote time and effort to the work.
5. The best way to begin changing employee behaviour is to provide health information and create awareness of how they can make changes while at work. Consider using the Fall 2012 Working Well in Halton poster: *How Much Are You Sitting?* The poster presents some of the risks associated with inactivity (sedentary behaviour) and how it can be addressed at work. This poster is available on the Region's website at: [www.halton.ca/workplacehealth](http://www.halton.ca/workplacehealth), then click "employers", "posters". In addition to the poster, consider other ways of communicating the messages to staff, such as paycheck stubs, email, intranet and/or staff newsletters.
6. Once you have provided health information and created awareness, start to implement some initiatives within the workplace. For example, walking meetings, a walking club, or a kick-off event that requires people to be physically active.
7. Consider approaching your HR department to create a policy supportive of the initiatives you are introducing. Use the sample policy in the toolkit as a guide to creating a version for your organization.
8. Look for current policies that exist in your organization that can complement the work you are doing. For example, an Alternate Work Arrangements policy can provide flexible work hours allowing employees to be physical before or during the work day.
9. Slowly introduce new initiatives into the workplace to keep the momentum going.
10. Evaluate staff response to the initiatives. This will allow reporting back to the committee or senior management on the uptake and maintenance of the new initiatives/behaviours. Relay to senior management and your committee, that behaviour change is complex and takes time and continued effort to see adoption of healthier practices. See *How to Keep the Behaviour Change Going* in the next section. Make recommendations on what the next initiative should be to keep momentum going.



## How to Keep the Behaviour Change Going:

Monitor the uptake of the initiatives and use the result of your monitoring to help decide what the next initiative should be. Do not be discouraged if uptake is slow at first. Introducing new ideas and creating new behaviours takes constant time and effort. The Stages of Change Theory outlines the different elements a person goes through when making changes in their life. Being aware of these stages can help you plan and execute the right approach to changing workplace norms and culture. See the table below.

### Stages of Change

Stage of Change	Helpful Strategies to Assist with the Changes	Workplace Initiative to Employ (in relation to occupational sitting)
<p><b>Precontemplation:</b> People are considering the change. Characteristics: People are in denial or do not know about the problem.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage the individual to rethink their behaviour.</li> <li>- Encourage self-analysis and thought.</li> <li>- Explain the risks of the current behaviour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create communications to raise awareness and educate about the problem and the negative health consequences of not changing the behaviour.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Contemplation:</b> People are becoming aware of the benefits of making the change, but to make the change creates costs or losses to the way they live. Characteristics: Ambivalence, conflicted emotions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weigh the pros and cons of changing the behaviour.</li> <li>- Confirm readiness to change and encourage confidence in their abilities.</li> <li>- Identify barriers to change and work at removing them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue with communications and introduce some simple initiatives (i.e. walking club, walking meetings, take the stairs signage).</li> <li>- Approach HR about a new policy to support Move More, Sit Less.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Preparation:</b> People start to make small changes in preparation for life long changes. They may start to take direct action like joining a club or support group. Characteristics: experimenting with small changes or collecting information about a change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write down goals.</li> <li>- Prepare an action plan.</li> <li>- Make a list of motivating statements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start clubs using a registration list and send out reminders for the first meeting date.</li> <li>- Hold lunch and learn sessions.</li> <li>- Release supportive policies.</li> <li>- Introduce new furnishings (sit-to-stand workstations).</li> <li>- Introduce stretch breaks at meetings.</li> <li>- Develop and provide incentives.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Action:</b> People start to take direct action and exhibit the change. Characteristics: Taking direct action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reward successes.</li> <li>- Seek out social support.</li> <li>- Make a list of motivating statements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer physical activity programming at lunch.</li> <li>- Reward with certificates of participation for walking groups or attendance at physical activity</li> </ul>

Stage of Change	Helpful Strategies to Assist with the Changes	Workplace Initiative to Employ (in relation to occupational sitting)
		events. - Erect bike racks for cyclists. - Encourage senior management to model new behaviours. - Provide incentives (free lunch from the cafeteria, winning of a bike, 6 month gym membership. paid day off work etc.).
<b>Maintenance:</b> People have adopted the behaviour and made the behaviour change.  Characteristics: Maintaining a new behaviour and avoiding temptations.	- Develop coping strategies to deal with the temptation to go back to old behaviour. - Remember to reward successes.	- Release supporting policies. - Provide desk design options that support the behaviour. - Continue communications. - Reward and provide incentives.
<b>Relapse:</b> This is a normal part of behaviour change- moving back to old habits. Characteristics: feelings of disappointment, failure and frustration.	- Identify triggers that lead to relapse. - Recognize barriers and take steps to overcome them - Reaffirm your goals.	All of the above.
Adapted from Kendra Cherry, Stages of Change. Last visited November 2013 <a href="http://psychology.about.com/od/behavioralpsychology/ss/behaviorchange.htm">http://psychology.about.com/od/behavioralpsychology/ss/behaviorchange.htm</a>		

# Move More at Work & Sit Less: Occupational Sitting and Health Sample Policy

The policy below is to be used as a sample for creating your own organization's policy and can be transferred into your own organization's approved template.

## Policy Statement

*[Insert organization's name here]* recognizes its role in employee health and as such has developed a policy to support employees to be as active as possible while at work. So *[insert organization's name here]* will encourage, foster and support opportunities for staff to be less sedentary and more physically active.

## Policy Purpose/Rationale

This policy's principles will help employees to move more and sit less (e.g. decrease sedentary behaviour, in particular prolonged sitting). In addition, this policy can assist employees to meet the recommendations outlined in the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

Through the use of the following health promotion strategies (principles), education and awareness, supportive environments and policy, applied in the following organizational domains of, physical environment, organizational culture and individual health practices, this policy will guide both the employee and the employer to understand:

- the corporate stance
- the appropriate environmental supports
- the supported practices

## Scope

All departments and organizational events.

## Definitions

### Active Lifestyle

A way of life, integrated into daily living where choosing to be physically active is valued over being sedentary. It is more than physical fitness and organized exercise, it is the conscience effort to move more (e.g. taking the stairs instead of the escalator, biking to the store/work, gardening, walking to a destination, using transit etc.).

### Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines developed by the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) include physical activity recommendations for:

- infants and toddlers age 0-4
- children ages 5-11

- youth aged 12-17
- adults 18-64
- adults 65 years and older
- adults with Multiple Sclerosis
- adults with Parkinson's Disease
- adults with spinal cord injuries

The guidelines provide concise, clear directions for Canadians on how to achieve better health by making physical activity a part of their routine. The guidelines provide recommendations on how physically active Canadians should be to achieve the best health possible. The guidelines suggest three types of activities:

- moderate- to vigorous-intensity activity
- vigorous-intensity activity
- muscle and bone strengthening activities

## **Prolonged Sitting**

Prolonged sitting is a consequence mostly experienced by the knowledge worker, but is not limited to this demographic. Sitting longer than an hour has been found to be detrimental to health and thus has prompted scientists to recommend movement (out of the chair) on an hourly basis for at least five minutes.

## **Sedentary Behaviour**

Sedentary behaviour is defined as any time spent sitting or lying down without movement (e.g. playing videogames, reading, watching television, working on a computer, doing crafts, etc.).

## **Steps**

*[Insert organization's name here]* will strive to help employees to move more and sit less (e.g. decrease sedentary behaviour, in particular prolonged sitting). In addition, this policy can assist employees to meet the recommendations outlined in the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. The following principles will be applied:

## **Education and Awareness**

- Staff need to be made aware of the negative health effects from sedentary behaviour (prolonged sitting) and how these negative effects can be countered while at work.
- Staff need the opportunity to learn more about how to lead an active lifestyle and that an active lifestyle is more than just an organized physical activity (e.g. Pilates or yoga) or going to the gym.
- Staff need to be made aware of the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and the health benefits derived from meeting the recommendations.

## **Supportive Environments**

- Work practices and the physical environment shall be modified where possible to enable staff to be active without compromising service delivery (adoption of sit-to-stand work stations, treadmill desks, walking meetings, stand-up meetings etc.).
- The *corporation/organization*, where appropriate, will provide the human and financial resources needed to support wellness initiatives that address sedentary behaviour.

- Senior management will actively work towards reducing sedentary behaviour (e.g. prolonged sitting) via the promotion of moving more, personal role-modelling, supporting alternative desk designs and creating a positive social climate towards more movement in the workplace.

## **Policy Development**

- Corporate policies and procedures should be reviewed and rewritten to support and encourage employees to become more active while at work (e.g. allowing flex time, altered work hours, desk design options, walking meetings, etc.).
- Managers should be notified of the new policy and educated on how to promote and support the policy within their teams.
- A wellness committee should be struck to support this corporate policy.

Adapted with permission from Niagara Region Public Health (2013)



# Move More at Work & Sit Less: Occupational Sitting and Health Sample Policy Notice

## Notice

New policy aimed at reducing sedentary behaviour (i.e., prolonged sitting) and promoting more movement in the workday – (*policy number here*).

It is the hope of the organization that this new policy will increase employees' opportunities, while at work, to reduce the amount of time spent sitting and assist employees to meet the recommendations of the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

## Scope

Entire corporation/organization

## Highlights

- [*Insert organization's name here*] will encourage and actively foster opportunities for employees to reduce sedentary behaviour (i.e. prolonged sitting).
- Principles have been established to guide corporate efforts to create work environments and conditions which reduce sedentary behaviour (i.e., prolonged sitting) and promote more movement in the employees' workday.
- The principles are education and awareness, supportive environments and policy, applied in the following organizational domains of physical environment, organizational culture and individual health practices.

## Action

Please review this policy with all staff (can be discussed at the next team meeting).

## Summary

This new policy can be found at (*insert link to policy here*).

Adapted with permission from Niagara Region Public Health (2013).