

New tool helps employees move more to avoid MSDs

Sitting all day at work is bad for your health! Now is the perfect time to take action against sedentary lifestyles that could be making your employees sick and costing you money. And WSPS can help you do it.

The way to reduce those risks, and associated costs, is to make movement a part of our workday and home life, says WSPS ergonomist Sandra Patterson. But how do you do that when your job requires you to sit or stand all day?

WSPS' new video, *Do you 20-8-2*, encourages viewers to move more, move often. It also explains the 20-8-2 rule to promote movement, created by Dr. Allan Hedge from Cornell University: sit for 20 minutes, stand for 8, and move or gently stretch for 2. This video is being released during Global Ergonomics Month, when all eyes are on the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and other health impacts associated with how we do our jobs.

By promoting movement we can reduce the risk of health issues. These issues include MSDs, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and even some forms of cancer. All are linked to sedentary behaviour.

Canadians on average sit for 9.5 hours a day, says Sandra. An hour of exercise a day is not enough to offset the hours sitting. "The body isn't meant to be in one position all day," says Sandra. It doesn't allow our bodies to burn energy. Simply standing instead is not the answer; prolonged standing has its own challenges, such as the risk of low back pain or varicose veins, and cardiovascular disease.

What we need to do is find an appropriate balance between walking, sitting, standing, and low intensity activity. "Employers can take the lead by helping employees understand why they need to pay attention to this," says Sandra. The video is one tool employers can use to create awareness and promote movement. These are great simple safety solutions for small business owners.

9 low-cost ways to move more, move often

The key is to interrupt sedentary behaviour as much as possible. Make movement a priority and a part of your daily routine. Here's what Sandra suggests:

1. reduce the time spent sitting by finding opportunities to work while standing or walking (e.g., stand while taking phone calls, walk over to colleagues instead of using emails)
2. track your daily steps, and gradually increase the number
3. add light intensity physical activities in your day by taking the stairs, parking further away, and going for a walk at lunch
4. have walking meetings rather than sitting in a room
5. if you're required to stand at work, shift from foot to foot, put your foot on a ledge, and do some gentle stretching
6. change postures every 30 minutes. Try the 20-8-2 rule
7. gradually increase to 2 hours/day of standing and doing light intensity effort at work

8. stretch before and after a long commute
9. set alarms to remind you it's time to move

Employers' role

Employers have a vested interest in helping employees alter sedentary behaviour and reduce health risks. First, communicate the “Move More, Move Often” message — via supervisors and your joint health and safety committee, safety talks, the WSPS video, or a WSPS lunch ‘n learn, posters, reminders, and/or contests. Second, support employees’ efforts to get moving. For example:

- provide options and opportunities for workers to change positions. For example, organize walking meetings, provide high stools and tables, create shared standing workstations
- be responsive to workers’ expressed ergonomic needs
- provide sit/stand equipment for workstations
- provide training and practice on how and why to change posture
- promote proper nutrition, stress reduction, and physical activity
- organize a walking club

How we can help

Download the WSPS video, [Do you 20-8-2?](#) and share with others in your workplace. These are simple, effective safety solutions, especially for small business owners, says Sandra. While you’re on site, check out other helpful WSPS resources, such as

- other complementary downloads
- e-courses
- training courses

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