

# Different desks offset idle worker behaviour

August 19 2013, by Hamish Hastie

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Prof Straker says there is evidence to show that people who sit more often tend to have a higher risk of cardio metabolic disorders and are at increased risk of cancers, heart disease and obesity. Credit: State Farm

Office workers are less likely to be inactive if their workplace environment uses sit-stand desks, according to a recent Curtin University study.

A sit-stand desk is designed to accommodate a person in either a seated or standing working position.

The researchers used inclinometers to record the sedentary behaviour of 131 Swedish call centre [workers](#) operating at either a sit-stand desk or sit desk over a full work shift.

The results showed workers using sit-stand desks were seated less throughout the day (78.5 per cent) compared to workers using sit desks (83.8 per cent).

Sit-stand desk workers also took 10 minutes less time to accumulate five minutes of standing or walking (36.2 minutes compared to 46.3 minutes).

The different desk types had no significant effect on sitting episode length or the number of switches between sitting and standing per hour.

Curtin School of Physiotherapy and lead author Professor Leon Straker says he was surprised at the small difference of time seated at the two types of desk but it was similar to results he had seen elsewhere.

"I expected a bigger difference," he says.

"A five per cent difference across the day, which was something like 19–10 minutes over their normal six hour shift, didn't seem much for when they had the opportunity to stand up.

"On the other side of it, people tend to not use the adjustability in the furniture that they have and we see that in people having adjustable chair or adjustable height screens people tend to find a position that's comfortable and rarely move it from there.

Prof Straker says the research is important because of the prevalence of, but largely unknown health impacts that [sedentary lifestyles](#) can have on individuals and society.

There's evidence to show that people who sit more often tend to have a higher risk of cardio [metabolic disorders](#) and are at increased risk of cancers, [heart disease](#) and obesity, he says.

Prof Straker says sedentary behaviour studies are only now gaining momentum.

"It's only been in the last five or 10 years that we have started looking at what happens to the people that are sitting all day," he says.

"Even if they go for a run and they get rigorous activity, are they still more at risk?

"The evidence suggests that they are, so we're interested now in not just the huffing and puffing sweating activity but also trying to break up the sitting activity."

**More information:** [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23218118](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23218118)

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