

Sitting and office lighting among work risks

September 25 2014, by David Ellis

Public health researchers at the University of Adelaide say office workers need to move more and sit less, and use warm-coloured lighting instead of blue-rich LEDs to help avoid some serious potential health risks.

Speaking in the lead up to Safe Work Australia Month (October), the Head of Public Health at the University of Adelaide, Professor Dino Pisaniello, says sedentary work and long, intensive hours are major issues for the office.

"Despite great gains in work safety over the past century, workplace-related injury and illness is costing around \$60 billion dollars each year in Australia. Among that cost is a significant burden of the office environment," Professor Pisaniello says.

"There are some serious risks in the workplace for many Australians, but most of these are modifiable or preventable."

Professor Pisaniello says emerging risks include the increase in sedentary behaviour at work as well as in the home environment.

"Prolonged periods of sitting may not only be detrimental to people's [health](#), but may also counteract the benefits of [regular physical activity](#). So even if a worker goes to the gym at lunchtime, all of that sitting around for the rest of the day could be having a long-lasting impact on their health."

He says long work hours are associated with adverse health, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and fatigue.

"One in five Australian working men has a 40% excess coronary heart disease risk attributed to work," he says. "Around 30% of all workers say they work at very high speed, to tight deadlines, or most of the time they have too much work for one person to do.

"The Fair Work Act 2009 provides many employees with a legal right to request flexible working arrangements, and studies have shown that workers who ask for and receive flexibility have lower '[work](#)-life interference' which is important for health."

Professor Pisaniello says laboratory studies suggest that "blue light" or "blue-rich" white LED light sources can damage the retina with long-term exposure. "Choosing office lights in the warm spectrum, favouring reds and greens over cool blues, will be more comfortable for reading and may be safer for workers' eyes. Today's energy-efficient LED bulbs can come in a warm spectrum as well as a cool, white spectrum," he says.

Provided by University of Adelaide

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