

Like sitting, standing in the workplace may have long-term health consequences

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Recent research has warned of the health detriments associated with sitting for long stretches of time at the office, but what about the nearly half of all employees worldwide who are required to stand for more than 75% of their workdays? Prolonged standing is associated with short-term adverse health issues, including reports of fatigue, leg cramps, and backaches, which can affect job performance and cause significant discomfort. A new study published in *Human Factors* suggests that, over time, this type of sustained muscle fatigue can result in serious health consequences.

"The work-related musculoskeletal implications that can be caused by prolonged standing are a burden not only for workers but also for companies and society," notes María Gabriela García, a PhD candidate in the Department of Health Sciences and Technology at ETH Zürich. "Long-term [muscle fatigue](#) caused by standing for long periods of time has not received much attention."

In "Long-Term Muscle Fatigue After Standing Work," García and fellow human factors/ergonomics researchers Bernard Martin and Thomas Läubli asked participants of two age groups to simulate standing work for five-hour periods. Participants could take brief seated rest breaks and a 30-minute lunch.

The authors found evidence of significant long-term fatigue following the five-hour workday, even when it included regular breaks, and that adverse symptoms persisted for at least 30 minutes following a seated recovery period. Moreover, young adults ages 18 to 30 were just as likely to experience long-term fatigue as were workers over the age of 50.

"Long-term fatigue after prolonged standing work may be present without being perceived," continued García. "Current work schedules for standing work may not be adequate for preventing fatigue accumulation, and this long-lasting muscle fatigue may contribute to musculoskeletal disorders and back pain."

Provided by Human Factors and Ergonomics Society

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