Advice on Sit/Stand Workstations

Before you consider requesting a sit/stand workstation please answer the following question:

Do you have, or have you experienced, any pain in your back, neck or arms when sitting and working for long periods? If you have answered yes to this question please complete an online incident report so action can be taken to ascertain whether your workstation set up is correct.

To lodge an incident report go to http://www.utas.edu.au/work-health-safety/hazards-and-incidents

Click on Notify an Incident or Near Miss and log in with your University username and password, complete the form and click Submit. Your report will automatically be forwarded to the Work Health & Safety Unit for action.

If you are not currently experiencing any pain but are concerned about recent publicity on the dangers of sedentary work the following is some advice on how to go about addressing the problem.

Ease Into It

Don’t rush out and buy a sit/stand workstation. Save that for once you’re really sure it is necessary. For now, start small. Any little bit of standing that you do will be an improvement over sitting all day long.

Here’s a few small tips that you can do without a sit/stand workstation. They might be silly, but they’re certainly better than sitting for 8 hours straight.

- Commit to doing a certain work task while standing, every time you do it. For example, take all of your calls while standing. Or, if you read at work, stand while reading reports or articles. Neither of these require a standing workstation.
- Take standing breaks during meetings. It has been found that this can actually help you stay focused.
- Drink more water. Not only is it healthy to stay well hydrated, but it'll get you going up to refill your glass more, and also get you going to the bathroom more. All that walking time is good time.
- Consider installing Exertime on your computer. Exertime is a software application that encourages employees to break long bouts of sitting by engaging in short bouts of physical activity during work hours. For further information visit http://www.exertime.com/About-Exertime/What-is-Exertime

Standing for long periods can also cause health problems

Standing is a natural human posture and by itself poses no particular health hazard. However, working in a standing position on a regular basis can cause sore feet, swelling of the legs, varicose veins, general muscular fatigue, lower back pain, stiffness in the neck and shoulders, and other health problems.

Keeping the body in an upright position requires considerable muscular effort that is particularly unhealthy even while standing motionless. It effectively reduces the blood supply to the loaded muscles. Insufficient blood flow accelerates the onset of fatigue and causes pain in the muscles of the legs, back and neck (these are the muscles used to maintain an upright position).

Prolonged and frequent standing, without some relief by walking, causes blood to pool in the legs and feet. When standing occurs continually over prolonged periods it can result in inflammation of
the veins which may progress over time to chronic and painful varicose veins. Excessive standing also causes the joints in the spine, hips, knees and feet to become temporarily immobilized or locked. This immobility can later lead to rheumatic diseases due to degenerative damage to the tendons and ligaments.

How can job design reduce the ill effects of working in a standing position?

The basic principles of good job design for standing work are:
- Change working positions frequently so that working in one position is of a reasonably short duration.
- Avoid extreme bending, stretching and twisting.
- Take suitable rest periods to relax; exercises may also help.

What can workers do to reduce the discomfort of working in a standing position?

- Adjust the height of the work according to body dimensions, using elbow height as a guide.
- Organize your work so that the usual operations are done within easy reach.
- Always face the object of work.
- Keep body close to the work.
- Adjust the workplace to get enough space to change working position.
- Use a foot rail or portable footrest to shift body weight from both to one or the other leg.

What should workers avoid while working in a standing position?

- Avoid reaching behind the shoulder line. Shifting feet to face the object is the recommended way.
- Avoid overreaching beyond the point of comfort.
- Avoid reaching above shoulder line.

If you’ve read through this, tried our tips and are now sure you need a sit/stand workstation

The provision of sit/stand workstations are an Organisational Unit expense so you need to approach the appropriate person within your Unit about providing you with a workstation.
There are various styles of sit/stand workstations available, two of the most popular at the University are the Ergotron and the Varidesk.

Varidesk: http://au.varidesk.com/

It is important to be aware that different styles of workstation also have different methods of operation and some styles may not be suitable if you have a pre-existing injury which may be aggravated by certain features of the workstation.

If you have a pre-existing injury please arrange for one of our rehabilitation providers to assess your requirements and advise on which style would best suit you. A list of service providers is on the Work Health & Safety Manual Handling/Ergonomics webpage: http://www.utas.edu.au/work-health-safety/major-risk-topics/manual-handling

Once your workstation is installed

Please ensure that your workstation is correctly set up by arranging an ergonomic assessment. A list of service providers is on the Work Health & Safety Manual Handling/Ergonomics webpage: http://www.utas.edu.au/work-health-safety/major-risk-topics/manual-handling

Again, start small. Best first steps are to set realistic goals. If you try to stand too much right off the bat, you’re probably not going to like it, and might not stick with it.

- Start small. A good first goal is to stand for one hour a day while at work. Do that for the first week then increase it to two hours—either two separate one hour shifts, or else a two hour shift straight. Both are just fine. Gradually work your way up until you find a standing amount that feels right for you. Even the most ambitious standers don’t stand for the full day, usually maxing out at about 80% of the work day.
- Since you’ll start by moving up and down a lot, you’ll want to create a desk that adjusts easily. It’s a huge deterrent to standing if it takes you 15 minutes to set up your desk, and then another 15 to take it apart each day.
- Laptops are not conducive to standing, because the keyboard and monitor are at almost the exact same level. It kind of makes sense—the name is “lap”top after all, which implies sitting.

Mastering the Fine Details

Once you’re standing an hour or two a day, you’ll notice that there are a few nuanced touches that can make a huge difference.

- Standing in place is actually not that good for you either. With all of these studies showing how bad it is to stand, some doctors have looked at the harm of too much standing, and have concluded that static standing, without any weight shift or movement, can lead to increased varicose veins.
- To combat this, set up your desk so that you can lean on something from time to time, in order to shift your weight around. And also, try and get in the habit of swaying or rocking—nothing drastic, but enough to get your weight moving around a little bit.
- Get comfy shoes, if you normally wear heels keep a comfy pair of flats at the office that you can change into them to stand.
- Get a standing (anti fatigue) mat, they can make a huge difference in your comfort throughout the day, especially when you start standing at extended stretches of time.
• If it is appropriate put music on. It'll get you dancing, which is good! You'll shift your weight more and avoid that problem of standing in the exact same place all day.

• Take breaks. This isn't a race. This is a behavior that you are ultimately hoping to instill for a long time, preferably the remainder of your working life. Give yourself a break from time to time. Make it easy on yourself to enjoy standing.

**What are some do's and don'ts regarding footwear?**

Your feet can only be as comfortable as the footwear permits.

![Foot icons with one marked with an 'x'](image)

• **DO** choose shoes that provide a firm grip for the heel. If the back of the shoe is too wide or too soft, the shoe will slip, causing instability and soreness.

• **DO** wear shoes that allow freedom to move your toes. Pain and fatigue result if shoes are too narrow or too shallow.

• **DO** ensure that shoes have arch supports. Lack of arch support causes flattening of the foot.

• **DO** choose footwear according to the hazard at your workplace.

• **DO NOT** wear shoes that are completely flat or with heels higher than 5 cm (2 inches) for long periods of standing.