

Top tips to help reduce time spent sitting when working at home

Prolonged sitting behaviour is an occupational health hazard for desk-based workers, and there is growing evidence people who work from home may sit even more compared to in an office setting. Sitting is classified as a sedentary behaviour, and too much sedentary time for long periods of time is bad for your short and long-term mental and physical health (even when we are active at other times). The World Health Organisation as well as the UK Chief Medical Officer recommend that adults limit sedentary sitting time ([click here for Chief Medical Officer recommendations](#)).

332 University of Edinburgh staff completed an online survey on sitting behaviour when working at home, as part of a project run by researchers from the Physical Activity for Health Research Centre (PAHRC), University of Edinburgh. **Results** indicated that staff spend an average of **90%** of their time sitting (**6.6 hours** a day) while working from home, which is higher than the average office worker. Participants also reported what they perceived influenced their ability to reduce their sitting when working at home, and these findings are reported below with reference to possible solutions proposed by stakeholders within the university.

*We recognise and acknowledge that not everyone is physically able to reduce sitting, and invite colleagues who are in this position to contact us for advice.

Staff barriers to sitting less

- Some staff sometimes get **immersed** in work and feel that **work demands** prevent them from reducing sitting, and are concerned that reducing sitting will impact **productivity**
- Some staff feel **social pressure** to always be contactable, at their desk, and present
- Reducing sitting is not an automatic behaviour, and sitting for long periods is a **habit**
- Lack of space, and lack of standing desks in working **environment** at home



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Top tips to help you reduce time spent sitting**Understand what is expected of you**

- Remember, productivity does not necessarily mean not leaving your desk. Talk to your manager about their expectations of you being at your desk and contactable. You may find that they do not expect you to be glued to your seat after all.
- Be open with your manager and let them know if you struggle to take breaks.

Break sitting habits

- Be open to taking breaks from sitting to enhance, rather than hinder, productivity.
- You may want to set prompts for yourself to take active breaks, such as timers or calendar reminders to move every 30-60 minutes.



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Replace sitting with standing/moving

- Could your meeting become a walking meeting? This works best when you know you won't need to view a screen or take notes.
- Could you stand during the meeting and make it active?
- Suggest scheduling meetings to start or end 10 minutes after or before the hour to avoid back to back meetings and provide time for a break.

Make your breaks active

- Breaks are great opportunities to reduce sitting and increase physical activity. Try taking standing or walking breaks, or doing some sort of active movement (such as laundry) on your break.

Buddy-up

- Is there someone you know who may also like to reduce their sitting? Support from colleagues will help, and you can take time to discuss how it is going and problem solve any issues together.

Make a plan

- Commit to yourself to do this for your well-being (write it down and add post-its to your screen as a reminder).
- Plan when you will do it (when, where, how and write it down).



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