

Are you sitting down too much? It's time to stand up

By Michael Jarosky



You slowly wake up to sit down at breakfast. You sit in the car/train/bus and arrive at work where you sit some more. You head home where you eat, sit on the couch with a few drinks, then lay down for bed.

If your office physique had a sponsor, it would be: Body by Bottle Shop.

Here's some problem areas you can turn around:

The back

It all starts with your back. With 80-85 per cent of the population experiencing some sort of lower back pain, physiotherapist Ryan Ebert says many of us have our posture all wrong.

"Poor form in a chair ... leads to extension in your neck, flexion in your spine, and curvature in your lower back. You're allowing gravity to flatten the discs, causing an acceleration of the aging process."

Poor posture equals a weakened core. "You shorten hip flexors and tighten hamstrings. The posterior chain is all connected; when your hamstrings tighten, it's a matter of time before back problems will reveal themselves. Getting the right chair with lumbar support is of utmost importance as it pushes the hips up, puts the spine into extension, and forces the body into the right position."

The neck

While sitting, when the back is curved, the neck usually moves forward in a turtle like fashion to see what's happening on the computer screen. Pain comes next.

Ryan attributes this to screen height and distance. "If your screen is poorly located, eventually your eyes (also a muscle) will weaken, and you'll compensate by leaning more and more forward throughout the day," he says. "By 3.30pm stress on the neck and upper back are at an extreme. The precise computer screen position is key."

The breathing

Hunched at your desk with a restricted diaphragm, breathing becomes short and laboured. Deep breaths are important for heart and brain health while managing anxiety. Try a yoga technique known as 'equal breathing'. For a few minutes, relax the body and (all through the nose) inhale for four seconds, then exhale for four seconds. Office smokers still take time and line the streets to inhale their poison, so there's no reason why you can't do the same with a healthy twist.

The core

If you're slouched in a chair, your core goes hours without being engaged. The stronger your core, the more your body can sit in a better posture.

With a stronger core:

- a) Your back is protected.
- b) You burn more calories sitting in a good posture than in a bad posture.
- c) Your pelvic floor muscles aren't at risk of weakening.

The stress

Relaxing with a few drinks each night only adds to poor sleep, dehydration, weight gain, and insignificant energy to start the day. Booze is our culture's quick-fix de-stresser, but there are healthier ways to wind down each day.

Try listening to music while drinking some healthy tea, go for a walk with your dog, take a bath, or learn to meditate.

The flexibility

Muscles get tight through sitting because they're in one position, but the body and its muscles were designed to contract and release through movement.

Ryan likes yoga out of office hours to increase flexibility, but working 9 to 5, you can still do something. "While sedentary, you're not getting blood to the muscles and CO2 build up results in knots," he says. "Sure it's great to go for a five minute walk, but at a minimum you can at least stand up, put your arms above your head and sit back down so blood can flow – that's all it takes."

And be wary of a post (sedentary) work exercise regime that has you jumping from chair to 100 per cent intensity without an extensive warm up. Your muscles aren't ready - something will strain.

The support

Your company can do more for you. Fruit instead of biscuits, water instead of fizzy drinks, and healthy meals instead of pizza delivery are just a few things that can create a healthier

environment. Encouraging exercise and providing mental health assistance provides a physically and mentally healthy company.

I recently took a group of corporates on a hike in the sun, on the beach, with amazing views - 'open bar' is the theme for most office outings, but companies are finally realising an investment in healthier employees is a wise one. Wellness programs and their ROI stats make this a fact.

"In a physical context, I don't preach standing desks or sitting on a Swiss ball for eight hours per day. The key is variety through movement. Sit, stand, breath, stretch, walk, and be active – a healthy office offers variety."

Some changes are physical; others are mental. Body by Bottle Shop won't change unless you BYO commitment. You commit to your job, your boss, and increased sales. You commit to providing for your family. You commit to your mates, co-workers, and your children.

You're the boss of billions of living cells. You are the CEO of your body. Will you commit to a healthier you?

Source; <http://www.executivestyle.com.au/are-you-sitting-down-too-much-its-time-to-stand-up-gk7zes>