

## Insights & advice

### Ways to stay active in your office job

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15 min read

#### Key takeaways

- ✓ It's hard to avoid, but sitting all day at an office job has been shown to have a negative health impact.
- ✓ There are small steps you can take to incorporate more movement into your day, like walking to work, setting a timer to get up, and building in bursts of exercise in manageable chunks.



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The average millennial now spends 60 hours a week sitting – something that [researchers](https://www.colorado.edu/today/2024/10/31/prolonged-sitting-can-sabotage-health-even-if-youre-young-and-active#:~:text=%E2%80%9COur%20research%20suggests%20that%20sitting,Psychology%20and%20Neuroscie) (<https://www.colorado.edu/today/2024/10/31/prolonged-sitting-can-sabotage-health-even-if-youre-young-and-active#:~:text=%E2%80%9COur%20research%20suggests%20that%20sitting,Psychology%20and%20Neuroscie>) at the University of Colorado at Boulder believe is directly connected premature ageing.

The good news? You can still find ways to be active, even if you're tied to a desk all day.

Here are some things you can try.

## 1. Build movement into your commute

If you can, try incorporating some kind of activity into your commute. Maybe that's walking to the train station instead of driving or getting off the bus one stop farther from work.

## 2. Take care of yourself

From tight shoulders to stiff necks and painful lower backs, it's not uncommon to feel the impact of your office work on your body.

The [University of Guelph's physiotherapy department](https://wellness.uoguelph.ca/hpc/physiotherapy/desk-workers) (<https://wellness.uoguelph.ca/hpc/physiotherapy/desk-workers>) recommends a few exercises to help combat these desk-related injuries, mainly tackling bad posture.

These include:

- Chin tucks, where you gently move your head like you're nodding
- Wall angels, where you have your back against the wall in standing seated position, moving your arms up and down with your elbows at a ninety-degree angle

If you are experiencing pain or discomfort due to your desk job, you might also consider working with a physiotherapist to find some exercises specific to your concerns. You could also consider [massage therapy](#) ([/insurance/health-and-dental-insurance/what-is-massage-therapy.html](#)) or acupuncture.

If you have [workplace benefits](#) ([/insurance/workplace-benefits.html](#)) or [private insurance](#) ([/insurance/health-and-dental-insurance.html](#)), these services might be included in your coverage.

## 3. When you can, choose the active option

Take the stairs when you could take the elevator or walk over to your teammates' desk rather than asking the question via email. If you've got the flexibility, take some calls while walking around the block.

This could also mean taking the stairs on your way to meetings, or getting outside for a walk at lunch. Put together, these little bursts of activity can add up. If your workplace provides a gym or fitness classes, think about making use of those, even if it's just for a quick 20-minute power workout before work, at lunch, or after work.

## 4. Keep moving, even at your desk

If you've got a walking pad, commit to keeping moving while you're reading through those documents for half an hour at your desk. You could also keep some small hand weights in a drawer, and work in a twenty bicep curls or arm circles in between calls.

## 5. Change the way you sit

For the parts of your day when standing or walking isn't an option, try "actively" sitting by substituting an exercise ball for your chair. Not only does it [engage your core, it also helps with posture](https://www.afpafitness.com/blog/benefits-of-sitting-on-a-stability-ball/) (<https://www.afpafitness.com/blog/benefits-of-sitting-on-a-stability-ball/>).

## 6. Stand when you can

A standing desk – which allows you to move the height up and down depending on the task – can make it much easier to spend some of your working day on your feet rather than seated. A cushioned mat underneath your feet and comfortable shoes can help to make this more enjoyable.

## 7. Cycle while you work

You can cycle to work – and also cycle while you're at work, thanks to a "[desk cycle](https://www.verywellfit.com/best-under-desk-bike-5195001)" (<https://www.verywellfit.com/best-under-desk-bike-5195001>). This device works your legs and calves while fitting discretely underneath a desk. It's great for circulation, and can easily be done while you're typing away or on a call. Add leg weights for an extra challenge.

## What's next?

- ✓ Try 1 of these strategies today and see how it impacts your wellbeing.
- ✓ If you have workplace benefits, check to see if you have coverage for services like physiotherapy or massage.
- ✓ If you don't have benefits through work, consider a private insurance plan like Freedom to Choose health and dental insurance.

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