

ERGO BULLETIN

To Sit or To Stand... That is the Question!

Beacon recommends that you look at the pros and cons for sitting or standing while you work to help you use your best judgement on the working position that best suits your work style.

Office computer work is typically categorized as a sedentary job due to the low physical demands it requires. We have all heard the saying “you have a nice cushy desk job because you sit all day”. As it turns out, there are many ergonomic hazards associated with the office worker as it pertains to posture and repetition. Until recently office workers typically sat all day at their computer workstations performing the same repetitive tasks such as keying or mousing using the same seated posture. With the advent of the sit/stand office workstation, many employers and employees alike want to know is this something that is good or bad, is it a passing fad or are there real benefits to standing while using a computer workstation.

In ergonomics, we like to say “the next move is always the best move”, meaning we like to encourage workers to change positions frequently in order to avoid the negative effects of performing job tasks using the same postures. Movement and regular exercise are the best ways to prevent cumulative stress from static postures.

Beacon has been promoting the sit/stand option in the manufacturing industry for years, specifically with assembly workers. In this case, using administrative controls such as job rotation or job enhancement, where different muscle groups are used along with a different posture, combined with engineering controls which involved providing a sit/stand chair and raising the work bench to a standing work height, we were able to reduce the overall ergonomic hazards as they relate to posture and repetition simply by providing a change in body positioning. Although alternating from a sitting to a standing posture does not take the place of movement and exercise, it is a step in the right direction towards having workers sit less.

Implementing sit/stand office workstations, whether it be a separate piece of equipment that is placed on top of a current desktop or an entire desk unit that moves up and down pneumatically, has been a topic that has many employers confused and concerned due to the conflicting research regarding the benefits of incorporating this type of workspace design into the main stream office environment.

See the reverse side of this bulletin for ***Pros and Cons for a Sit/Stand Office Workstation***, and a list of reference links to support these pros and cons.

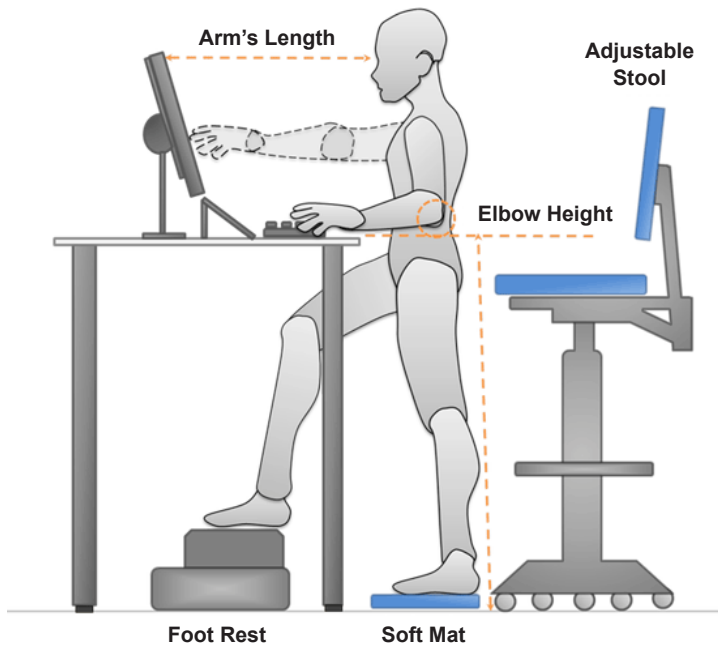


Illustration courtesy: <https://www.uclahealth.org>

Pros and Cons of Sit/Stand Office Workstations

PROs

- Reduces strain on the lower back from prolonged sitting
- Burns more calories compared to sitting
- Increase blood flow by helping the body stretch out and engage the core and leg muscles
- Improved job performance
- Works best when incorporated with a comprehensive employee wellness program

CONs

- Standing for prolonged periods of time is also not good for you, leading to joint and back pain, as well as swelling and fatigue
- Standing can also aggravate bad posture, (sway back), standing on one leg causing asymmetry throughout the spine, and does not replace exercise
- Field studies show there is minimal evidence regarding a positive impact on productivity, job satisfaction, cognitive function or work absences associated with illness
- There is a general lack of long term research on the impact of sit/stand desks in the workplace

The best way to determine if a Sit/Stand Office Workstation is right for your environment is to review the recent research. The following websites will provide you with a summary of the positive and negative outcomes from controlled studies, as well as companies who have implemented a sit/stand office setting:

Stand Up for Your Health: www.worksafetexas.com/office-workers-stand-up-for-your-health.aspx

Sitting to Standing Workstations: www.uclahealth.org

Recommendations for Sit-Stand Workstations: www.workspace.com

Sit-Stand Desks Improve Worker Health, Performance: www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com



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