



# Physical Activity Background Information



Our bodies are made to move! They were not made to sit still for most of the day at home, at work, or in the car. Long commutes & changes in the way we work has meant some people spend a lot of their day sitting or standing still. Your workplace may not be able to change the type of work, but you can change the job design (variety of tasks and breaks).

## Why is Important?

Helping people move more can also help a business' bottom line. Workplaces that encourage their people to sit less and move more can enjoy benefits such as: improved staff productivity, reduced numbers of musculoskeletal disorders and injuries, reduced absenteeism, as well as presenteeism and greater staff retention.

Time is often identified as a barrier to being active. Working adults spend approximately 60% of their waking hours at work, with some spending additional time travelling to and from work. Many jobs involve low levels of movement, with long periods of time seated in front of a computer or operating machinery. [Creating a workplace wellbeing policy](#) that includes flexible working hours and arrangements can limit the barrier to being active

and create opportunities for staff to engage more regularly in physical activity.

There are many ways to [increase physical activity](#) during the working day and spend less [time sitting](#). Regular movement throughout the working day can be just as important for health as planned exercise.

[Ministry of Health](#) recommend that we 'sit less, move more' and that even small breaks from prolonged sitting are good for the health. In terms of physical activity, the Ministry of Health recommend that adults engage in at least 2 ½ hours of moderate or 1 ¼ hours of vigorous physical activity spread throughout the week.

Benefits of being active at work include better overall health, improved self-esteem, more energy and increased productivity. Being active is one of the Mental Health Foundations [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) and is shown to lift our mood and reduce stress.

## Facts

[The New Zealand Health Survey 2022/2023](#) identified that:

- About half of all adults (47%) are meeting recommendations for physical activity.
- One in eight adults are physically active less than 30 minutes per week.

## Key messages

Where possible, workplaces should:

- [Create a workplace wellbeing policy](#) that includes flexible working hours and arrangements which can enable staff to be more physically active.



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- Promote and encourage the use of active transport to get to and from work.
- Provide adequate changing and showering facilities at all work premises.
- Provide adequate storage, lockers and drying facilities for sport and wet weather clothing.
- Provide sufficient secure bike parking at each work site.
- The workplace can support staff to be more physically active by creating a healthy culture.