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Sitting for long hours is harming us: Study

A study of over 1,000 Indian professionals puts the spotlight back on unhealthy sitting postures at workplaces.



That workplace stress, long working hours, lack of physical activity at work, and unhealthy food habits are taking a toll on us is no secret. You know these are bad for your health, but you brush them off because everybody seems to be sailing in the same boat and we seem to have internalized a twisted appropriation of placing work before health. In this context, you might write off 'Keep Moving', a recent study by Godrej Interio, as another piece of the [report](#) that establishes a relationship between long working hours, sitting positions at work and health of employees, but closer inspection shows just how seriously you need to take it.

Conducted with over a 1,000 Indian working professionals between the ages of 20 and 50 years from 70 diverse organisations like Tata Consultancy Services, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India etc., the study sought to understand how static postures – sitting in the same position for long

durations of time – at work are impacting our body and health. Here are the key findings of the same:

- 60% of the employees studied remain physically inactive while they are working, and nearly 70% of them had suffered from pain the last six months.
- 64% said that they spend around 9 hours at their work desk, or in meetings and conferences, whereas 68% admitted that they spend 6 continuous hours at their desks working; 75% reported to spending 2 hours in long conferences every day.
- Employees between the ages 46-50 years worked the maximum number of hours – about 10.5 hours a day – of which almost 6 hours are spent sitting, however those between the ages 31-40 suffered the most pain.
- 76% reportedly suffered from musculoskeletal pain/discomfort in the last six months; while 44% had single-pain problems, 56% said they have experienced multiple-pain problems.
- The regions most affected due to static postures are back, neck and knee. The problem seems more acute in young women, as 83% of those between 20-25 years of age suffered from spinal pain but only 17% of men in the same age group reported the same.
- The problem doesn't impact employees alone – on an average, employees have taken 3-4 days of leave during a time frame of two months due to musculoskeletal disorders and pain, impacting the organizations' productivity.
- Fatigue, strain to the body or select muscles, spinal and skeletal injuries are some of the adverse impacts that are found to be a result of static working postures.

The report lists some steps that organizations can take to mitigate the impact of static postures on employees' health, such as introducing sit-stand workstations, offering varied seating options like bean bags, standing tables, and asking select employees to act as wellness champions.

While the study exclusively focuses on the relationship between sitting postures and their impact on health, one cannot deny that other factors like stress, unhealthy eating habits, erratic working hours, conflict, unhealthy work environment also impact the health of employees adversely. It is encouraging, though, to notice a trend-in-the-making among organizations to truly care for the well-being of their employees. As noted in the study, an employee who isn't fit will ultimately impact the organization as well; and the cynic in the writer does wonder if that is the primary motivation for companies to facilitate a balance in the lives of employees. Either way, our work lifestyles are harming us in ways that we are only beginning to discover. If organizations can use their clout and influence to nip this in the bud and promote a culture of physical and mental well-being for their employees, it will be a win-win for all.

WEBLINK : https://www.peoplesmatters.in/article/life-at-work/sitting-for-long-hours-is-harming-us-study-16294?utm_source=peoplesmatters&utm_medium=interstitial&utm_campaign=learnings-of-the-day