



Activity Based Work

What is Activity Based Work?

Activity Based Work is a concept of incorporating physical activity into the sedentary nature of certain occupations. There is a significant amount of research that supports the link between sedentary lifestyles and chronic disease such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, as well as contributing to eye strain and musculoskeletal pain. While much of the Activity Based Work concept revolves around the design of a workplace, this guideline focuses on you as an individual and what you can do to incorporate physical activity into your day.

Only you have the ability to control how often you decide to move throughout your work day. It is important to seek out opportunities for movement wherever possible. JCU recommend incorporating movement every 30-60 minutes.

There is a common misconception that a standing workstation is required to incorporate physical activity into your workday (for more on standing workstations please see the WHS-PRO-GUI-007d Sit to Stand Workstation Information Guideline). However, standing does not equate to being physically active as it is a static posture and a sedentary activity which can bring additional hazards to our musculoskeletal health. Standing (in isolation from physical activity) also fails to address the link between sedentary lifestyles and chronic disease. There are many ways to incorporate movement into your day:





Repetition & Breaks

The use of microbreaks & other ways to avoid repetition

The body is designed to move in a variety of different ways and works best when kept physically active. There are times however, at work and at home, where it is possible to maintain a static position for prolonged periods of time, or conduct repetitive activities without adequate rest breaks.

Examples of prolonged static postures

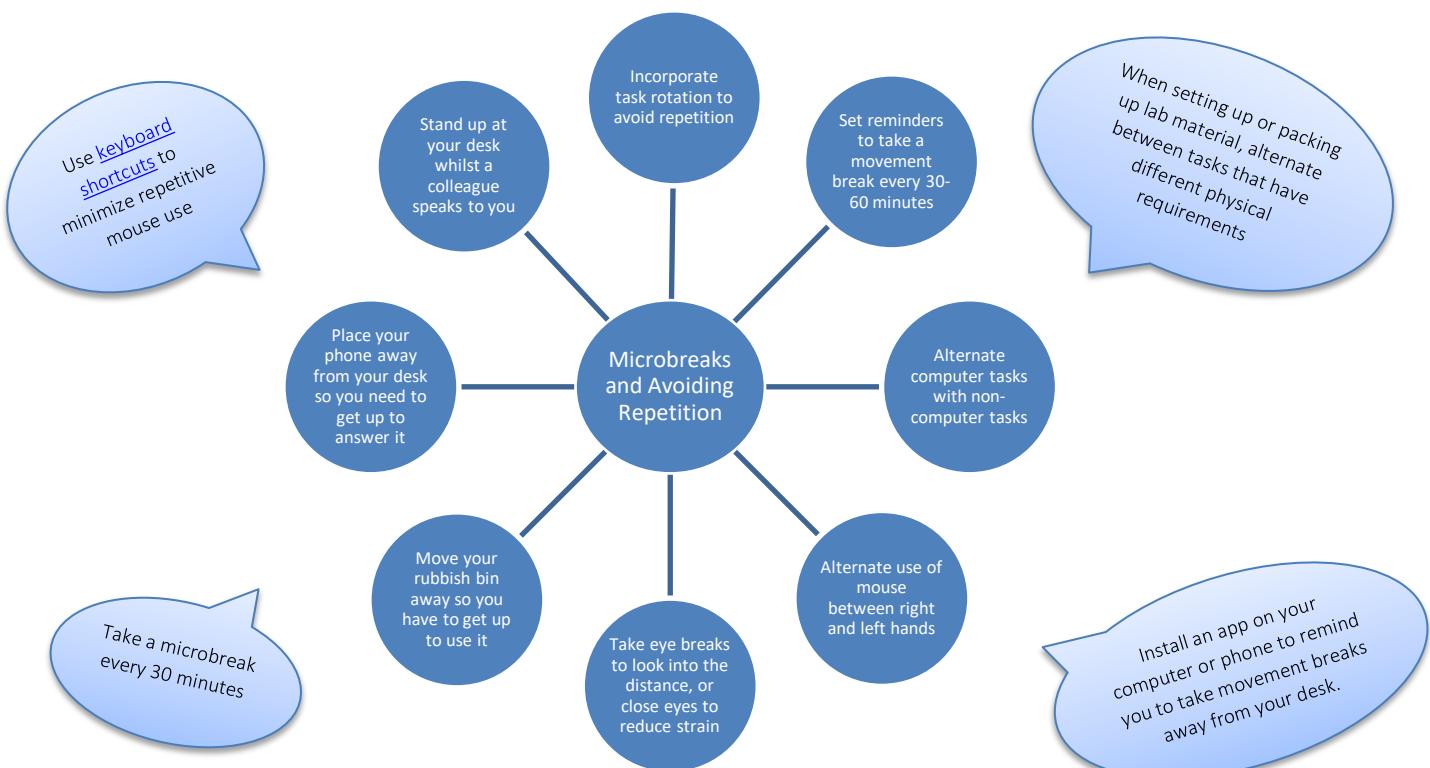
- Being seated at a computer workstation
- Microscope use
- Driving / flying long distances
- Standing in a queue
- Watching a movie / tv

Examples of repetitive activities

- Typing and mouse use
- Lab sampling activities
- Packing / unpacking equipment
- Video gaming
- Chopping food, knitting, weeding, painting, hanging out the washing

Being aware of your posture and the duration of activity is key to preventing discomfort or injury associated with prolonged postures and repetition.

In addition to the strategies listed on page one to enhance physical activity in the workplace, it is important to identify all the opportunities for movement within the work day. These opportunities may only be short, but when undertaken frequently throughout the day, their effectiveness is great. Microbreaks are short positional change breaks (<30s) which have been shown to have no negative impact on productivity in the workplace, they are integrated into the work day rather than being a break away from work. The following strategies can be implemented to address both static postures and repetition through the use of microbreaks every 30 minutes.



Risk Assessment

If you consider your work activity to be repetitive (>2 times per minute) or incorporate sustained or awkward postures (held for >30 seconds at a time) and these tasks are conducted over a long duration (continuously for 30 minutes, or a total of >2 hours per shift), these activities may place you at risk of developing discomfort or injury. You are encouraged to discuss the risks with your team and manager. Using the information and ideas in this Activity Based Work Guideline it may be possible to minimise the risks associated with these activities. All risk assessments and hazards should be logged in RiskWare, JCU's centralised Risk Management System. You may also contact the Work Health & Safety team to complete a Hazardous Manual Task Risk Assessment.

Physical Activity Guidelines

Meeting the recommended physical activity guidelines requires a concerted effort.

Australian Guidelines for Physical Activity (adults 18-64 years)

The following recommendation has been provided by the Australian Government:

- Any activity is better than nothing. If you are not currently active, start by doing small amounts and gradually build up to the recommended amount;
- Aim to be active on most, if not all days of the week;
- Accumulate 150-300 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity, or 75-150 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both intensities, each week;
- Do muscle strengthening exercises at least twice each week; and
- Reduce the time spent in prolonged sitting positions.

If you are new to physical activity, have health problems, or are concerned about the safety of becoming more physically active, speak to your doctor or health professional such as an Exercise Physiologist.

How can I get started?

JCU provides staff and their immediate family with access to the [Fitness Passport](#). The Fitness Passport provides discounted membership to a number of gyms and swimming pools allowing you to get fitter for less.

[JCU Health](#) in Townsville provides discounted Exercise Physiology which can be used to help you get started on an exercise program best suited to your needs. Physiotherapy treatment is also available for your rehabilitation needs. JCU undergraduate Exercise Physiology students run a number of programs throughout the semester which may be of interest. Keep an eye on your staff email throughout the year for further information.

See your local council website for more ideas on how to become more physically active.

References

Information in this Guideline has been provided with reference to the following websites / articles:

[Worksafe QLD Factsheet on Sedentary Work](#)

[Australian Government Department of Health: Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines](#)

[Worksafe Ergonomic Guide to Computer Based Workstations](#)