

A standing desk, also called a stand-up desk, is basically a desk that allows you to stand up comfortably while working (5). Many versions are adjustable, so that you can change the height of the desk and alternate between sitting and standing. These are referred to as height-adjustable desks or sit-stand desks.

Although research is still in early stages, it does appear that using a standing desk can have impressive benefits for health. It may also increase productivity.

At the very least, using this type of desk can partly negate the harmful effects of sitting too much.

- People who sit a lot every day burn very few calories, which can be linked to weight gain and obesity, which in turn results in increased risks of diabetes, heart disease and early death. (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Back and neck pain are some of the most common complaints of office workers who sit all day.
- Sedentary time is linked with an increased risk of both depression and anxiety (14, 15).
- Studies have found a strong link between increased sitting time and early death. This is not surprising given the strong association between sedentary time, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Using a Standing Desk Correctly

There are no clear guidelines about the best ways to use a standing desk (1) and standing desk can be difficult to get used to or even cause problems when not used correctly. Try these tips to maximize the benefits of your standing desk while minimizing the risks.

1. Alternate Between Sitting and Standing

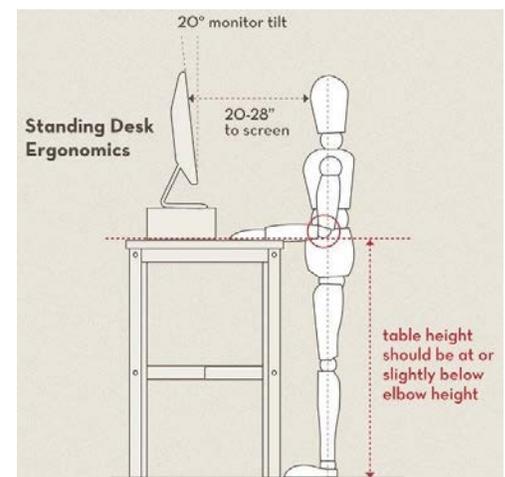
There is no doubt that [sitting too much](#) is very bad for your health. However, that certainly does not mean you should stand all day instead. Studies have found strong associations between lower back pain and standing occupations, such as bank tellers and production line employees (2, 3, 4). Standing still for long periods is also thought to negatively affect your leg muscles, tendons and other connective tissue, and may even cause varicose veins (5).

Fortunately, this can be avoided by simply alternating between sitting and standing. The research is still in its early stages, but a ratio of 1:1 or 2:1 sitting versus standing time appears to be optimal for comfort and energy levels, without affecting productivity (2). That means for every 1 to 2 hours you sit in your office, 1 hour should be spent standing. Try to alternate between sitting and standing every 30 to 60 minutes.

2. Adjust Your Desk and Screen

Correct desk height and computer screen position are fundamental for improving comfort and minimizing injury risk in the office (6).

To begin, set your standing desk at about elbow height. This means your elbows should be in a 90-degree position from the floor.



| Image Source: iamnotaprogrammer.com.

Recommendations for screen position are not black and white, but the consensus is to have it 20–28 inches (51–71 cm) from your face. As a quick reference, the distance should be no less than from the tip of your middle finger to your elbow. The top of your screen should be eye level, with a small upwards tilt of between 10 and 20 degrees. The idea is that you should never need to tilt your neck up or down.

If you are using a laptop, try to align the keyboard with your elbow height. However, this forces you to tilt the screen back and your neck downwards, which is not ideal for long-term use. If possible, use a separate monitor or keyboard with your laptop.

For additional information about office ergonomics, visit [MN OSHA](#).

3. Purchase an Anti-Fatigue Mat

Anti-fatigue mats are commonly used in jobs that require extended periods of standing, such as working on a product line or at a counter. These mats reportedly combat standing fatigue by encouraging subtle movements of your leg muscles. This improves blood flow and reduces overall discomfort in one's legs and back ([7](#), [8](#)).

4. Change Your Keyboard and Mouse Position

Working long hours on the computer can strain your wrists. Therefore, it is important to optimize wrist position when sitting or standing. The ideal angle when standing is slightly more extended (tilted upwards) than when sitting. In order to protect your wrists when standing, always keep your keyboard and mouse at the same level, and your wrists straight when typing.

If you still experience sore wrists on occasion, consider using an adjustable keyboard stand and gel mouse pads for optimal support.

5. Use Arm Supports

An arm support is soft padding or surface area that attaches to your desk. It is designed to reduce pressure on the wrist that operates the mouse. This is a well-researched area, with numerous studies showing arm supports can significantly reduce the risk of developing neck and shoulder problems, especially on the side of your dominant hand ([11](#), [12](#)).

6. Remember to Take Breaks

Even though standing at your desk is better than sitting, you should still take regular breaks to move and stretch, clear your head and rest your eyes. For some people those quick breaks come naturally, while others may need an automated reminder.

A great option is to install reminder software on your computer (e.g. [StretchClock](#)) or to download a break reminder app on your phone (e.g. [Stand Up!](#)). There are many free versions of both of these.