

Physical activity combats sedentary desk jobs

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Office workers can rest assured – as long as you are physically active, your desk job won't kill you.

While increasing attention has been paid to the detrimental effects of overall sedentary behaviour in recent years, new research from the University of South Australia shows that long periods spent sitting can be combatted with moderate [physical activity](#).

Published today in the international journal *Obesity*, the study shows a desk job won't put you at risk of obesity and associated health problems as long as you exercise.

UniSA Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr Carol Maher says her study is

good news for [office workers](#).

"The nice thing about these results is that people with desk jobs can be reassured that as long as they are doing a bit of activity, their desk job isn't putting them at risk of obesity," Dr Maher says.

"And our results suggest the amount of physical activity needed is actually very achievable."

Dr Maher's study was done on 5083 American adults, taking cross-sectional analyses on a nationally representative sample from the April 2003 to June 2005 US National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. She undertook the study while she was a visiting scholar at Pennington Biomedical Research Centre in Louisiana last year.

"I looked at how people's physical activity and sedentary activities were related to the risk of being obese and overweight," Dr Maher says.

"We classified people into three activity and three sedentary groups – low, medium and high physical activity; and low, medium and high sedentary activity.

"We found that low physical activity was a strong predictor of obesity. People who had low levels of physical activity were up to four times more likely to be overweight or obese than people in the moderate and high activity groups, while sedentary time was unrelated to being overweight.

"Obesity was more strongly related to not being active than either TV time or total sedentary time."

Dr Maher says the amount of activity needed is 'achievable'.

"Small differences in daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity of just five to 10 minutes were associated with relatively large differences in the risk of [obesity](#)."

More information: Maher, C. A., Mire, E., Harrington, D. M., Staiano, A. E. and Katzmarzyk, P. T. (2013), The independent and combined associations of physical activity and sedentary behavior with obesity in adults: NHANES 2003-06. *Obesity*, 21: E730–E737.
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