

Chair company takes a bold stand

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Working for a living is a fact of life, but sitting for a living is unnecessary and bad for our health, says the general manager of Chairs Ltd.

So if you are reading this sitting down, consider standing for the duration.

“It might seem funny that we’re a chair company promoting standing, but really what we’re saying is we have to move, get up, stand up and sit down and do it all in moderation,” Mark MacPhail said from the company’s Burnside office Thursday. “Don’t find yourself in the same place two hours after you sat down.”

Promoting good ergonomic practice in the workplace has been the Dartmouth retailer and manufacturer’s mandate since its 1989 inception. Now, as study after study reveals the life-trimming effects of our increasingly sedentary work habits, the company is on a mission to educate and motivate through its blog.

And, as a result, business is improving. The average cost of an adjustable sit-stand desk is about double that of a traditional ergonomic desk and chair setup, but when employee health and wellness is on the line, MacPhail said companies are realizing the return is well worth the investment.

“We are seeing a lot of progress in the way companies are approaching health and wellness in the workplace.

“They’re taking a proactive approach and now we’re seeing some come in to do assessments on individuals who haven’t started the position yet.”

The advent of technology-based jobs that require we sit behind a computer all day is correlated with increased waistlines, circulation problems, heart disease and diabetes.

Research published in 2010 by the American Cancer Society found that the longer we sit, the shorter our lives. A study completed by the University of Leicester in England last year concluded that even 30 minutes of exercise a day is not enough to curb 23½ hours of sitting.

But none of this is new information.

The fact is, MacPhail said, we have to do more than buy an adjustable desk.

“The advantages of standing over sitting are there, but it’s still incumbent on the individual to be aware of their posture while their in each position.

“Too many people put stock in a magic chair or a magic alternate mousing solution, but that’s not going to cure their issues. It’s about changing habits and behaviour.”

MacPhail operates an adjustable desk and regularly spends half the day standing and half of the day sitting; with mini-breaks and adjustments throughout, of course.

Although he has got the equipment, he said it is still a challenge to remind himself to get up or shift positions.

“I hate to think people are thinking about sedentary sitting and then just changing it to sedentary standing. That’s definitely not the right approach.”

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