

# Physical activity among office workers in Japan

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Sufficient physical activity is vital to staying healthy. But for office workers whose job means spending most of the day at their desks, staying active is difficult. Researchers in Japan shed light on how office

workers can keep active throughout the working day.

In a recently published article in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, a team of researchers from the University of Tsukuba investigated how [office workers](#) at an insurance company in Tokyo deal with the challenge of staying physically active. Their study is based on two sets of focus group interviews with office workers and managers, respectively.

"The negative health effects of a sedentary lifestyle are being taken increasingly seriously in Japan as a [public health](#) issue," notes Yoshio Nakata, one of the study's authors. "Because office workers spend more than 70% of their working hours sitting, they are at higher risk of developing conditions such as diabetes."

The interviews explored how office workers perceive the importance of physical activity and how they view the situation regarding physical activity in the workplace. They also invited suggestions for ways to increase their levels of physical activity.

"The importance workers place on physical activity results from factors related to the individual, the socio-[cultural environment](#), the [physical environment](#), and the [organizational culture](#)," comments Associate Professor Nakata. "For example, factors related to the individual include their biological health and personality. Organizational factors include matters such as a company program to promote physical activity or a healthy work–life balance policy."

The researchers looked at solutions in terms of capability, opportunity, and motivation. Office workers' capability can be increased by evidence-based health education. They can be given the opportunity to engage in physical activity through changes to the physical environment, such as issuing standing desks or installing a shower room. Strategies to improve

motivation can include incentive programs to reward employees for increasing indicators of physical activity such as their daily step count. Such programs can be effective but are often expensive—lower-cost alternatives include posters to promote physical activity and encouraging messages from executives.

As [worker](#) health is positively related to worker productivity, further investigation of the strategies identified by the researchers to promote [physical activity](#) among office workers is warranted.

**More information:** Jihoon Kim et al, Proposal of a Comprehensive and Multi-Component Approach to Promote Physical Activity among Japanese Office Workers: A Qualitative Focus Group Interview Study, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph19042172](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19042172)

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