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Getting on the move for better office worker health

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SITTING down all day could be putting office workers' health at greater risk, a recent study project has found.

Research by the University of Tasmania and the Department of Police and Emergency Management shows that physical activity and exercise is vital to the health of office employees.

And sitting down for more than four hours a day could increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity.

But a new computer application named Exertime, developed by the uni's Faculty of Education and partially funded by the State Government's Healthy@Work project, could help reduce the risk.

Exertime prompts workers every 45 minutes to

stand up and do two minute of exercises suitable for an office environment, up to 12 times a day.

UTAS human movement lecturer Scott Pedersen said employees from the police department who tested Exertime had an improvement in health and wellbeing.

"Employees who took part in the trial decreased their sitting time from five hours a day to about four hours a day," Dr Pedersen said.

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"This increase in standing time at work was associated with improvements in physical and mental health, blood lipid profiles [cholesterol, glucose and triglycerides] and job productivity."

Human movement researcher Dean Cooley said follow-up reports from those participating in Exertime trials revealed they had also experienced increases in energy and alertness.

"Follow-up interviews revealed that participating in the Exertime

activities had brought additional

benefits," Dr Cooley said.

"The positive findings associated with the trial raise the potential for Exertime to be made available for all Australian workplaces."

Police Commissioner Darren Hine said his department was committed to giving employees the best possible health conditions and participation in the Exertime project had yielded promising results.

"The trial has achieved its goal of putting small amounts of physical activity back into the working day for office-based employees and it's

helped the department in its commitment to providing opportunities for personnel to keep fit and healthy," he said.

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OFFICE EXERCISE: Improving the health of office workers are UTAS Human Movement researchers Dr Scott Pedersen, left, and Dr Dean Cooley, right, with administrative assistant at the Police Commissioners office Miranda Walsh.

Picture: SAM ROSEWARNE