



Supporting Recovery during the Working Day

Objective

There are many ways to control the stress that occurs during the working day. A moderate workload is not harmful to health if it is possible to recover from it. The aim is to make it possible to recover from the workload on a daily basis.

Study these measures that help employees recover during the working day and keep their stress at a reasonable level. Most measures require policies at the organizational, unit and team levels. Supporting recovery is possible if the entire work community participates in the development process.

Steps

1. In your work community, discuss the concrete ways in which the workplace and the work community can promote healthy lifestyles. Healthy lifestyles and jointly agreed measures and goals contribute to everyone's recovery.
2. Identify the stress factors of your workplace.
3. Assess what recovery measures you already have in place to reduce stress.
4. Select the measures suitable for your work community that you will develop and test.
5. Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the measures.

Ways to recover from work during the working day

The workplace can support recovery during the working day with policies at the organizational, unit and team levels.

Policies allow employees to take care of their daily recovery with their own choices.

The measures are related to the following themes:

- work environment
- workload management
- cognitive ergonomics
- work breaks
- meals
- exercise
- remote work, mobile work, travel work and multi-location work

Work environment

Working in a safe and accessible work environment is pleasant and smooth, prevents injuries and allows changing your posture and provides sufficient space to work.

In addition to the work environment, the functionality of work equipment affects work performance and stress.

- The workspaces must have sufficient room to perform the work, move around and change work postures.
- Suitable temperature, sound environment and lighting affect the comfort of the work environment, the efficiency of work and stress.
- Ergonomic furniture (e.g. desks and chairs) and tools allow maintaining a balanced and supported posture. They allow for moving around and changing work postures.
- Assisting the mobility of the patient is one of the most physically demanding tasks in care work. Adequately spacious facilities, patient lifts, height-adjustable beds, washing surfaces and shower chairs, as well as increasing the competence of the personnel through ergonomics training reduce stress.
- A calm break room or rest area helps to focus on work and promotes recovery.
- It is possible to perform concentration exercises in a calm space, relax before demanding work tasks and recover from demanding tasks, if necessary.
- Having a natural landscape visible from the window and displaying photos of nature contribute to recovery from stress and sensory recovery during the working day.

Workload management

- Attention is paid to the demands of the work and stress at the workplace, and they are discussed in meetings and in everyday work situations.
- The division of labour and ways to reduce the workload are discussed in the work community. The work is developed in co-operation.

- Supervisors and employees discuss the prioritization, organization and possible restriction of tasks.
- Help related to work matters is both requested and provided. Demanding tasks are performed together, for example, as a work pair.
- Ergonomic work postures, lifting and patient transfers are paid particular attention to in work and job orientation.

Cognitive ergonomics

Everyone's work involves cognitive work, i.e. problem solving and information processing, such as remembering, concentration and reasoning.

An appropriate amount of cognitive stress is good as long as the employee has the opportunity to recover from it during and after the working day.

The cognitive stress related to work can be reduced by focusing on one task at a time and minimizing interruptions and distractions during work.

- Basic rules for being reachable and unavailable are set.
- A shared digital calendar is used. It provides rhythm to joint work and meetings.
- Calm working hours during which colleagues may not be interrupted can be agreed on at the workplace.
- Availability is communicated by means including applications' status messages and updating the shared calendar.
- Interruptions can be reduced by silencing the alerts from phones, email services and other communication channels.
- Demanding work tasks should be scheduled at a time when employees are most refreshed.
- Calendar entries can be used to set aside time for individual work and co-operation that requires concentration, as well as restorative breaks.
- The number, duration and timing of joint meetings are set so that breaks between work tasks and meetings are possible.
- In addition to meetings, sufficient working time is reserved for other work tasks.
- Times when no meetings are scheduled, such as lunch breaks, are set.
- Additional space is reserved in the calendars of working days. Space can be reserved in the calendar by scheduling meetings of 45 or 90 minutes, or by starting them at quarter past, rather than on the hour. It is advisable to arrange breaks for long meetings.
- Time for transitions and breaks is reserved to support recovery during the working day.

- During meetings, it is advisable to change your posture, move around, and stand up in order to help maintain alertness.
- At work, it is a good idea to use notes to help memorize things.

Work breaks

An efficient working day always includes adequate breaks.

Employees must have at least half an hour of rest for each six-hour working day.

- There are agreed times for lunch breaks and possible coffee breaks at the workplace.
- During breaks, it is possible to spend time together, acknowledge successes at work, and talk about things that put everyone in a good mood. The sense of community can be an asset in the workplace, so it is important to invest time in it!
- During the working day, short micro breaks of less than five minutes (e.g. walking, deep breathing or stretching) promote recovery from work and concentration.
- Spending time in nature during breaks supports recovery. For example, a 20-minute walk outside can be relaxing.
- When working on a computer or mobile device, the eye can be rested by looking at a distance, such as the view from a window.

Meals

A regular and healthy diet ensures that there is enough energy for the brain and muscles for working and recovering from work. Alertness can be maintained with an appropriate meal rhythm.

- The workplace provides the opportunity to eat healthy and varied meals at regular intervals during each shift.
- The workplace has set times when everyone comes together for coffee and lunch breaks.
- The times of the breaks are marked on the calendar so that everyone has time to eat and it is also possible to eat together.
- Daily lunch and coffee breaks marked on the calendar remind everyone of meals and support recovery also when working remotely and travelling.
- During meal breaks, things not related to work are discussed and, at the same time, the personnel can get detached from work for a while.
- The workplace provides a comfortable space with a water cooler, a refrigerator and a microwave for meals, as well as dishes that make it possible to store packed meals.
- Walking or cycling to a lunch restaurant can help in detaching from work, and support recovery.

- In night work, meals should be light to avoid gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g. abdominal pain). Caffeine or plenty of fluids should not be consumed, especially at the end of the night shift.
- Any snacks served in meetings provided by the workplace are refreshing and healthy.

Exercise

Appropriate exercise helps to recover and cope at work. Good physical fitness helps withstand stress and promotes recovery in all jobs.

In physically demanding work, the body is under stress, so restorative and body maintenance activities are required, as well as the possibility of taking rest breaks during the working day.

- The employer encourages the personnel to exercise during their breaks.
- Guided break exercise and relaxation moments that support recovery are organized at the workplace.
- The employer provides a break exercise application, which can also be used in remote work.
- The workplace has exercise equipment available that can be used in break exercise, such as gymnastics sticks, rubber bands, and dumbbells.
- The workplace's showers and dressing facilities enable modes of commuting that require physical activity.
- Walking meetings are also arranged whenever possible.
- Prolonged sitting or standing can be reduced by changing work postures.
- Free materials and campaigns encourage healthy lifestyles such as not smoking, healthy eating and all kinds of physical activity during the working day and in free time.
- Heavy exercise is not recommended 2–3 hours before going to bed or just before a night shift. Exercise improves the duration and quality of sleep and, if timed correctly, alertness during night shifts.

Remote work, mobile work, travel work and multi-location work

- It is also worth ensuring breaks and their rhythm when working at the homes of clients and patients and in remote work and travel work.
- Work areas and the area for eating meals should be kept separate, if possible. Meals are not eaten in patient rooms or at a computer, for example.
- When working remotely and while travelling, lunch and coffee breaks can be taken at home or at a nearby restaurant or café, if possible.

- When working remotely, a separate office or workstation facilitates the separation of work and free time, detaching from work, and recovery. Also, moving work equipment and work-related materials out of sight after the end of the working day can promote detaching from work.
- In work that requires travel, it is advisable to plan possible snacks and places to eat in advance.
- At the workplace, it may be considered whether it is permissible to take ergonomics supporting work equipment home or to a client or patient for a fixed period of time. These types of work equipment may include an adjustable office chair, laptop, mobile device, a separate screen and a keyboard. The employer must provide the employee with the assistive devices needed for the purposeful and safe performance of the work.

Additional reading

Cognitive ergonomics

- [Cognitive Work | Finnish Institute of Occupational Health \(ttl.fi\)](#)

Exercise and physical activity

- [The Exercise According to Work Tool | Finnish Institute of Occupational Health \(ttl.fi\)](#)
- [Adults on the Move program](#)
- [Off we go! Health at workplaces | Finnish Institute of Occupational Health \(ttl.fi\)](#)

Remote work

- [Tips to support remote work | Finnish Institute of Occupational Health \(ttl.fi\)](#)