

Monday 2 October 2023

New data reveals 87% of Australian adults have experienced a work-related musculoskeletal injury with prevention the best protection.

WORKSPACE WEEK - 2–8 OCTOBER 2023 - *Work Well Anywhere*

Today, the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA) launched WorkSpace Week (2-8 October 2023) with the release of new data revealing the high incidences of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSD) in Australia and their impact on workers and have issued a warning for those most at risk of workspace spine-related injuries.

WorkSpace Week is an initiative of the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA), dedicated to minimising workspace WMSDs which are Australia's leading work health and safety concern costing the economy over \$55 billion annually through direct health costs, lost productivity and reduced quality of life of sufferers.

In launching the national campaign on Labour Day (NSW, SA and ACT) to kick off national Safe Work Month, Dr David Cahill, President of the ACA said, "Through WorkSpace Week our aim is to help prevent the incidences of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) by educating Australians about workspace risks and strategies to prevent WMSDs from jobs known to pose a high risk to workers.

"According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2019), musculoskeletal conditions account for the greatest proportion of persistent pain conditions - the second largest contributor to disability world-wide with low back pain being the single leading cause of disability, globally.

"WMSDs are a range of inflammatory and degenerative conditions affecting the muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, peripheral nerves and supporting blood vessels that may be caused by a single workspace event, but commonly result from repeated harmful workspace activities over an extended period of time," Dr Cahill said.

"Reducing the incidences of WMSDs and minimising their impact through prevention, early diagnosis and effective treatments should be the first priority of both workers and employers alike," Dr Cahill said.

To better identify the prevalence of WMSDs and workers most at risk, ACA commissioned Pureprofile to conduct an independent survey of 1001 Australians' nationally that revealed 87% have, or have experienced a WMSD that can also impact mental health leaving no doubt as to the enormous burden WMSDs have on Australians' spinal and mental health while costing the economy billions.

"Although body stressing is the most commonly reported cause of physical injury for serious workers compensation claims as a result of poorly executed lifting, pushing, pulling or bending; the survey revealed prolonged sitting, computer usage (in an office or at home) and repetitive movements at work can also lead to chronic neck and back pain if not prevented or treated when injuries first occur," Dr Cahill said.

"With 87% of respondents reporting experiencing musculoskeletal pain or injury while at work or as a result of working, and 73% of sufferers experiencing 3 or more WMSDs, the most prevalent being low back pain (62%), neck pain (55%), mid back pain (53%) and tension/cervicogenic headaches (52%), the data demonstrates a significant need for employers and employees to practice preventative measures," he said.

"Considering the survey results and in light of the worldwide study led by the University of Sydney demonstrating low back pain is the most commonly recorded workspace injury; WorkSpace Week is

aimed at prevention and early intervention of WMSDs caused by body stressing, repetitive work, poorly set up non-ergonomic workstations and mental stress,” said Dr Cahill.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021-22), those most vulnerable to WMSDs are community and personal service workers such as healthcare, aged care, NDIS and disability service workers; while machinery operators, drivers, labourers, technicians and tradies are also among those with the highest rates of physical work-related injuries.

However, the survey identified computer use as a leading cause of the top four WMSDs (low back, neck, mid back and tension/cervicogenic headaches) - the only trigger ranked first or second for 9 WMSDs with computer usage ranking as the third or fourth most common trigger for the remaining 3 WMSDs.

With 89% of workers who worked at a desk reporting that they suffered an WMSD (including those who do a combination of desk work with standing and/or physical work), and female desk workers reporting the highest incidence (91%) compared to men (76%); WMSD relating to computer use in non-ergonomic workspaces, poor posture and the lack of effective exercise programs to improve spinal health play a significant role in causing WMSDs.

“The survey also revealed that 84% of WMSD sufferers experienced work-related stress which can lead to tension and cervicogenic (neck related) headaches impacting workers’ concentration, productivity, social engagement and their overall wellbeing and quality of life,” said Dr Cahill.

With the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) announcing the reduction of paracetamol product pack size to address acknowledged risks of overuse (May 2023); and the University of Sydney Sydney’s findings (June 2023) that opioids should not be recommended for acute neck or back pain as there’s no benefit and there is a significant risk of long-term harm; it’s vital people suffering from musculoskeletal disorders seek early treatment for spine-related conditions rather than depend on medications for pain relief.

Studies have shown WMSDs caused by physical or mental stress respond well to early, effective chiropractic healthcare that treats the injury, not just the symptoms and can help prevent deterioration, improve recovery outcomes, reduce severity and help avert long-term implications including reliance on medications to manage chronic pain and depression.

Chiropractic healthcare plays a vital role in providing 350,000 non-surgical, drug-free chiropractic consultations every week for Australians. ACA chiropractors are Australia’s leaders in providing a patient centred, multi-modal, therapeutic approach to improving the spinal health and overall wellbeing through proven relaxation methods and drug-free holistic healthcare that treats underlying conditions and not just the symptoms.

Anyone who undertakes repetitive actions, prolonged standing or sitting, lifting or pushing/pulling, computer use at home or the office, and those impacted by workplace stress can all suffer from a range of work-related spinal health issues including, back or neck pain and headaches that can develop into chronic pain.

Prevention is the best protection and there is much that can be done, so during National **WorkSpace Week 2023** the ACA is focussed on preventing work-related spinal health disorders caused by physical and mental stress, repetitive work and poorly set up non-ergonomic workspaces to help minimise workspace injuries and the long-term impact on employers, the economy and the overall health and wellbeing of injured workers.

The ACA has developed free resources available at workspaceweek.org.au including the **Ergonomic Checklist** for computer users, **My Healthy WorkSpace Stretching Poster** and **Factsheets** for headache sufferers and workers who sit, lift, bend and stand for prolonged periods for display in workspaces. Workers can also listen to the **Consult A Chiro Podcast** to learn more about maintaining spinal health and download and use the free **Straighten Up app**, ‘your pocket chiropractor’ to help minimise WMSDs and maximise spinal health and wellbeing to improve productivity so all Australians can work well anywhere.

During WorkSpace Week, Australians are encouraged to host a **#StraightenUpAustralia Challenge** – a simple three-minute exercise activity using ACA’s **Straighten Up app** in their workspace to promote working well anywhere and to share video and images of their **#MyHealthyWorkspace**.

[#WorkSpaceWeek](#) - [#WorkWellAnywhere](#) - [#StraightenUpAustralia](#) - [#MyHealthyWorkspace](#) [#SafeWorkMonth](#)

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WORKSPACE WEEK 2023 - MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

MEDIA CENTRE: To download the full report, hi-res images, factsheets, stretching posters and vision scan the QR or visit <https://bit.ly/WSW23-Media>



INTERVIEW REQUESTS: For interview requests, please contact:

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