



HEALTHY HEART

Sit Less, Live Longer

The Dangers of Prolonged Sitting

Sitting is the new smoking in this generation. That's a pretty accurate comparison as prolonged sitting has some serious repercussions on your health.

It makes sense that sedentary behaviour can lead to obesity because you burn fewer calories when you are sitting versus standing or walking. But that's not all. According to Mayo Clinic endocrinologist, James Levine, people who sit longer are more prone to a host of diseases including breast cancer, prostate cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, and even depression.

Although there is no conclusive evidence to explain how prolonged sitting can lead to such diseases, there are some convincing explanations. Here's a look:

- Idle muscle cells release less of the enzyme that's responsible for eliminating fats from the bloodstream and maintaining "good" cholesterol in your body, cites the *Journal of Physiology*. This results in an increased risk of developing a cardiovascular disease.
- Findings published in *Diabetologia*, Journal of the Eastern Association for the Study of Diabetes,

suggest that the cells in idle muscles do not respond well to insulin, which can lead to insulin resistance and eventually to type 2 diabetes.

- People who are sedentary for more than half the day are more likely to become obese over time. Obesity, says Dr. Graham Colditz, from Washington University School of Medicine, can promote inflammation, a cancer-causing process. The risk of developing colon, endometrial and lung cancers is particularly elevated.

There is probably a lot of other undetected mechanisms that contribute to the harmful effects of prolonged sitting. For the time being, the above mentioned explanations should be enough of a motivator to get you to stand up or better yet, go for a walk whenever possible.

HEALTHY MIND

Get on Your Feet

Move to Save Your Life

When was the last time you got up and walked around the office? When did you last stand up to take a stretch break? If your answer to both questions is hours ago, you are among the majority of office workers who are endangering their health due to excessive sitting. Being on your backside is so bad for your health that it can actually reduce your life span.

In fact, *British Journal of Sports Medicine* reports that for every hour spent sitting, you are reducing your life expectancy by an average of 21.8 minutes even if you eat a balanced diet and maintain an exercise routine after work. And what's even more alarming is that the health hazards of excessive sitting cannot be undone by exercising outside of work hours.

For those of you with careers behind a desk for more than four hours a day, here are some simple ways to encourage more standing time:

- Opt to talk to your colleagues in person rather than send an email. You can probably save yourself multiple email exchanges.
- Avoid eating your lunch at your desk. Take a break by eating in the lunchroom with your colleagues and suggest to go for a short walk after your meal.
- Propose standing meetings or standing desks to help get you on your feet. This arrangement is beneficial even if it's for half the time.
- Use a headset instead of the wired telephone so you can pace during a conversation. If a headset is not available, you can still stand when you are on the phone.
- Set a timer on your computer to stretch every hour or however you see fit. There are plenty of free apps to remind you to take a break. Some apps even come with instructions on how to stretch.
- Try walking an extra two minutes each hour as that may counter the dangers of sitting for too long. The goal is to keep moving.

HEALTHY LIVING

Take a Stand

How to Reduce Your Sedentary Time

We sit more often and for more time than we do for any other activity including sleeping. We sit to eat snacks and meals. We sit when we commute to and from work. Most of us sit when we are in the office. Even our social life involves sitting – watching a movie, surfing the internet, chatting over coffee at a café or going out for dinner. The amount of harm that prolonged sitting does to our body is worth making some immediate changes.

Try the following activity tips to help break out of your sitting binge:

- Instead of sitting at a café to chat, try going for a walk while you talk. While you are conversing, you won't even realize you are also getting a work-out.
- Get yourself a pedometer and set a daily goal of 10,000 steps per day. If you fall short on one day, you can remind yourself to make up the difference the next day or two.
- Set a limit and monitor your sit-down time. When you are nearing your limit, you are likely driven to get up and do something.
- Trim back your TV time. If you are sitting down to watch TV, get up and walk around during the commercial breaks.
- Challenge yourself by taking the stairs wherever possible. This includes the workplace, a social setting, such as a mall, or even at home if you live in an attached residence.
- Go for a walk with your dog or young kids as they can surely encourage you to keep moving longer than planned.
- Exercise regularly. It will help reduce your sedentary time by keeping you off the chair.



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GROUP BENEFITS

Source: British Journal of Sports Medicine