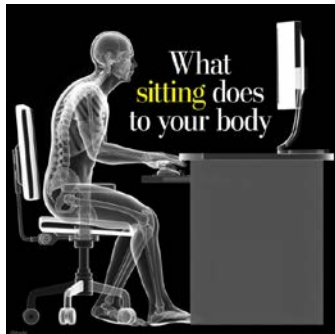


SITTING TOO MUCH?



We all know we need to be more active, but there is increasing evidence that we need to spend less time sitting down as well.

Research has suggested that remaining seated for too long is bad for our health, regardless of how much exercise we do.

Studies have linked excessive sitting with being overweight and obese, type 2 diabetes, some types of cancer, and premature death.

Prolonged sitting is thought to slow the metabolism, which affects the body's ability to regulate blood sugar, blood pressure and break down body fat.

Many adults in the UK spend more than seven hours a day sitting or lying, and this typically increases with age to 10 hours or more. This includes watching TV, using a computer, reading, doing homework, travelling by car, bus or train – behaviours referred to as sedentary – but does not include sleeping.

Experts believe there is something specific about the act of sitting or lying for too long that is bad for our health.

The link between illness and sitting first emerged in the 1950s, when researchers found London bus drivers were twice as likely to have heart attacks as their bus conductor colleagues.

Official health guidelines

The strength of the evidence is such that the government issued recommendations in 2011 on minimising sitting for different age groups.

Health experts recommend breaking up long periods of sitting with "shorter bouts of activity for just one to two minutes", and taking "an active break from sitting every 30 minutes".

The advice applies to everyone, even people who exercise regularly, because too much sitting is now recognised as an independent risk factor for ill health.

The experts added that "All-day movement is now seen as being just as important for the maintenance of good health as traditional exercise."

How much sitting is too much?

The advice is clear: to reduce our risk of ill health from inactivity, we are advised to exercise regularly – at least 150 minutes a week – as well as reduce time spent sitting or lying.

Adults are advised to try to sit down less throughout the day, including at work, when travelling and at home.

Tips to reduce sitting time:

- stand on the train or bus
- take the stairs and walk up escalators
- set a reminder to get up every 30 minutes
- alternate working while seated with standing
- stand or walk around while on the phone – but be careful to pay attention to where you are walking!
- walk to a colleague's desk instead of emailing or calling
- swap some TV time for more active tasks or hobbies

How fit are you?

By meeting recommended levels of physical activity, your risk of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes is reduced by up to 50%. The Department of Health recommends that adults should do 150 minutes of physical activity a week.



HEALTHY HEART



WATCH YOUR HEALTH