

The Health Risks of Sitting All Day

We all joke about couch potatoes, but spending too much time sitting is no laughing matter when it comes to your health. Between hours of desk work, long commutes, and common pastimes like binge-watching TV or scrolling social media, sitting quickly adds up—often without us realizing just how much. Research indicates that prolonged sitting is associated with a range of health issues. Fortunately, the solution is simple: get up and move regularly throughout the day.

How being sedentary impacts your health

Studies have found that the more time people spend sitting, the greater their risk of developing chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, certain types of cancer, and dementia—regardless of whether they exercise regularly. Additionally, extended periods of uninterrupted sitting increase the risk of:

- lower back and spinal issues
- signs of premature aging
- weight gain and obesity
- weakening of the leg muscles
- mental health concerns, such as anxiety and depression

While regular exercise has many benefits, it may not fully offset the effects of prolonged inactivity. The key is to stay active through regular exercise while also breaking up long periods of sitting with movement throughout the day. Doing so helps improve circulation, engage and maintain muscle function, and prevent metabolic slowdown.

Ways to get moving throughout the day

Incorporating more movement into your daily routine can be easier than it seems. Even small changes can help to counteract the negative effects of prolonged sitting. Here are some ways to add more activity into your day:

Move while on the phone. Instead of staying seated, stand up and walk around while talking on the phone. Use a wireless headset or earbuds so you're able to move freely.

Stretch and reset regularly. Get up from your desk and stretch every hour or so. Do a few shoulder rolls, neck stretches, or yoga poses to loosen tight muscles. Use your phone or calendar to set up reminders.

Optimize your work setup. Make your space more movement-friendly. Consider getting a standing desk, setting up an under-desk walking pad, or using an exercise ball instead of a chair to engage your core.

Take meetings on the go. Walk with a co-worker while discussing work ideas or catching up. If you work remotely, walk around your home during virtual meetings.

Keep active at home. Find ways to keep moving at home. Turn on music and dance while you're cooking. Stretch, lift weights, or use a treadmill while watching TV. Opt for an audiobook instead of reading, so you can stay active while listening.

Take regular walking breaks. Short walks throughout the day can boost creativity, increase productivity, and reduce stress. Step away from your desk and walk around the office, your home, or outside during lunch and other breaks.

Track your steps. Use a fitness tracker or smartphone app to monitor your daily step count and set movement reminders.

Take the long way. Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Park farther away from the entrance to add in more steps. If you take transit, get off a stop before, so you have a longer distance to walk.

While sitting is sometimes unavoidable, keeping an eye on how much time you spend seated and finding ways to add movement into your day can significantly improve your health and wellbeing.

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