

Sitting is the New Smoking

Most of us live and work in a sedentary culture and studies show that sitting too much is taking a huge toll on our health.

Dr. James Levine, director of the Mayo Clinic-Arizona State University Obesity Solutions Initiative, has been studying the adverse effects of a sedentary lifestyle for years and sums up his findings this way. "Sitting is more dangerous than smoking, kills more people than HIV and is more treacherous than parachuting. We are sitting ourselves to death."

Many other researchers agree with Dr. Levine, and continue to find evidence that prolonged sitting increases the risk of developing serious illnesses that include heart disease, various types of cancer, and Type 2 diabetes. In addition, the effects of long-term sitting persist even if you follow other healthful habits.

It appears that the impact of movement, even leisurely movement, is profound. In addition to burning more calories when you move, the muscle activity needed for standing and other movement seems to trigger the process where the body breaks down fats and sugars. When you sit, these processes stall and your health risks increase.

Take a moment to analyze your typical day. How much time do you spend sitting? Think about time spent at the computer, watching TV, and driving or riding in a vehicle. Also consider time you sit while enjoying hobbies, such as sewing, knitting, crafting, and woodworking, watching a ballgame or reading.

So, how can we sit less and move more? Start by simply standing, rather than sitting, whenever you can, and do as many tasks as you can while you walk. Here are some tips:

- »» Stand while you talk on the phone, eat lunch or when reading the mail.
- »» Stand during webinars and conference calls.
- »» Use a standing desk for office work and other desk activities.
- »» Put the remote control next to the TV instead of next to you and stand up during commercial breaks.
- »» Walk to visit a neighbor instead of calling them.
- »» Take meetings out of the conference room — talk while you walk.
- »» Move the printer away from your desk so you need to stand or walk to retrieve copies.
- »» For every 30 minutes you sit, stand for 5 minutes. Set an alarm to remind you, or at the very minimum move every 60 minutes.
- »» Use the restroom on another floor of your office building or home, and take the stairs.
- »» Stand often while you watch a live sports event – get up and cheer for your team!