

Is Sitting the New Smoking?



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Because of the well documented health risks associated with smoking, even those who choose to smoke are aware of the dangers of tobacco use. It may be surprising to some to learn that similar, serious health risks are now associated with too much sitting and prolonged periods of inactivity.

Dr. James Levine, a Mayo Clinic endocrinologist, has extensively studied the effects of long periods of inactivity. He has linked regular sitting for prolonged periods with a number of health risk factors including increased blood pressure, excess body fat around the waist, high blood sugar and abnormal cholesterol levels all, of which increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

The negative health effects of prolonged sitting and an otherwise sedentary lifestyle are apparently unavoidable even to those who exercise regularly. Automobiles, computers, television and sedentary jobs all can contribute to an inactive lifestyle.

So how can we counteract the negative effects of prolonged periods of inactivity?

In their book "Move a Little, Lose a Lot", Dr. Levine and Selene Yeager point out that up to 350 extra calories a day can be burned by replacing two and a half hours a day of sitting with standing. Other experts in the field are beginning to make recommendations that people with sedentary jobs and lifestyles interrupt prolonged sitting with at least 1-3 minute breaks of brisk activity every hour.

Sit 60, Move for 3

While researching this article, one strategy that has emerged in workplaces throughout the country is the encouragement of those with sedentary jobs to follow the "Sit 60, Move for 3" plan. As a member of the Non-Monroe County Municipal School District Program, you will soon have the opportunity to participate in this initiative. The WIN Committee (Wellness is Now) has just purchased a supply of computer monitor cards with the **Sit for 60, Move for 3** caption printed at the top of an "L" shaped white board that conveniently adheres to the top right of your computer monitor. It is our hope that this will help remind you to move regularly and more frequently throughout the workday. Details as to how to get one of these cards for your computer monitor will be available from your district's WIN Committee representative soon.

Other ideas to help increase physical activity during your work day include:

- return a phone call or email in person
- stand during phone calls
- station the printer away from your desk
- set an alarm and follow the 60/3 concept
- take the stairs
- park further away
- walk at lunch time and on breaks
- have a walking meeting
- drink more water so you have to get up to walk to the bathroom
- trade your office chair in for a stability ball
- create a work station where you can stand

Incorporating regular movement into your day will undoubtedly have positive effects on your health. Why not make this one of your top priorities today?

References:

James A. Levine, M.D., Ph.D., "What Are the Risks of Sitting Too Much?", Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, June 16, 2012

James A. Levine, M.D., Ph.D., and Selene Yeager, "Move a Little, Lose a Lot", New York, Crown Publishers, January 20, 2009