



To Your Health

Information You Can Use

Staying Active During the Day

Typically, an office worker will spend the week sitting at a desk, often hunched over a computer. A manufacturing employee may spend the majority of the shift standing up, performing the same movements over and over. We devote most of our waking hours to our jobs, and our bodies pay the price when we remain still or sedentary for too long. We need to move, and move often, to stay healthy!

In January 2015, the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine* published the results of a study that linked prolonged sitting to increased risk for cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. For example, sitting for eight to twelve hours a day raises your risk for type 2 diabetes by more than 90 percent.

Unfortunately, even regular exercise cannot counteract the danger of being too sedentary throughout the day. Standing still, however, is not the answer, as it puts significant strain on the circulatory system, legs and feet, and can cause backaches. To maintain your health, and to cut your risk for disease, you need to add more physical movement to your workday.



Rise Up

If you have a desk job, there's no way around it - you're going to spend a lot of time in a chair. However, you can still make small tweaks to your daily routine to increase your activity level.

- ✓ **Start with a walk.** Don't look for the closest parking spot. Enjoy the warmer weather by parking further from the door.
- ✓ **Climb to the top.** Ignore the elevators or escalators in your building, and take the stairs instead. If your office is located on a high floor, consider riding the elevator only halfway, and then walking up the rest.
- ✓ **Make it personal.** Instead of calling or emailing a coworker, take a stroll over to his or her desk. Not only will this get you moving, but speaking to others in person can help to build stronger relationships and to prevent misunderstandings.
- ✓ **Take a break.** Make a habit of taking a two-minute break at least twice an hour to move around or stretch. For example, stagger your trips to the printer or copier, so you can get up multiple times. Take the long way around to the coffee machine or restroom.

If possible, try to sit for no more than 20 minutes at a time, or to stand in one position for more than eight minutes. If you are unable to leave your workstation briefly, do several minutes of stretches to keep your muscles, tendons and joints flexible.

- ✓ **Stand when the phone rings.** Consider standing up to take phone calls. You could even incorporate some stretching, such as flexing your arms and fingers.

Stretch Yourself

In addition to taking more steps during your day, consider stretching to stay flexible. These exercises, recommended by WebMD, may help you to avoid muscle strain and discomfort.

- ✗ **Stand up and sit down, without using your hands.** This may sound easy, but it becomes harder to do as you get older. In fact, studies show that individuals who cannot do this have a lower life expectancy. For a greater challenge, move from a standing position to sitting on the floor, and then stand up again. If you managed these movements without assistance from your hands, arms or knees, then you're doing well!
- ✗ **Leg extensions.** Extend your legs in front of you, so they are parallel to the floor. Next, flex and point your toes. Release and repeat several times.
- ✗ **Shrug.** Shrug your shoulders, lifting them up to your ears. Hold, release and repeat several times.
- ✗ **Give yourself a hug.** Place your right hand on your left shoulder, and your left hand on your right shoulder. Take some deep breaths, and release the area between your shoulders.



Don't Stop Moving

A 2014 editorial published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* took a hard line, stating that “excess sitting is lethal.” **It doesn't matter if you regularly exercise or maintain a healthy weight. Your chair is a major risk factor for various diseases and health conditions.**

Being sedentary at work is only half the problem. Many of us spend our free time sitting in front of the TV or a computer screen. You don't have to breaking a sweat to incorporate more movement into your downtime.

- ✓ **Try a standing desk for home computer use.** You move more when using a standing desk, and burn more calories than you do sitting. Some tabletop models cost less than \$100, making this an affordable option.

Standing desks are not a new idea. In fact, Leonardo da Vinci, Charles Dickens and Winston Churchill are all reported to have used standing desks.

- ✓ **Don't veg out.** If you're watching TV, get up during commercials to do some stretching or walking in place. You could also perform floor exercises, like planks, sit-ups and push-ups, while watching your favorite shows.



Staying active during your viewing time has another benefit - it may keep you from snacking too much in front of the TV.



- ✓ **Spread out your housework.** Instead of waiting until the weekend to tackle all your household chores, consider doing tasks like vacuuming and mopping the floors during the week. Not only will this get you on your feet, but it will give you more time during the weekend to enjoy more strenuous activities, such as bike rides or walks with your family.

- ✓ **Keep track.** Wearable technology has come a long way from the simple pedometer. Sophisticated fitness tracking devices, such as Fitbit and Jawbone, are worn on your wrist and do far more than tell you how many steps you've walked. They can also monitor your sleep and heart rate, and count calories. Prices vary, but many models cost less than \$200.

Wearing one of these devices throughout the day can help to keep you aware of how truly active you've been. It can assist you in establishing and meeting your personal health goals.

- ✓ **Pick up the leash.** Dogs are usually enthusiastic exercise partners, and they require daily walks to maintain their own fitness. You can burn up to 200 calories every 30 minutes while taking a stroll with your furry friend.

