

Sitting can be Hazardous to your Health

How sedentary lifestyles are harming our bodies

Ahh, the lure of the empty chair. How it beckons us to just take a load off, to plant our bums in the comfort of an ergonomically friendly chair and just relax. A comfy chair, be it our favourite recliner at home or our perfectly adjusted office chair, is one of life's little pleasures....until we use them too much.



As modern society shifts away from manual labor and physical work environments to digital-style productivity we are finding ourselves growing wider, getting weaker, and becoming unhealthy as a result. The Australian Heart Foundation has stated that more than half of the country's workers do not do enough exercise to be healthy.

In studying 1,104 people, National Heart Foundations chief executive, Mary Barry, concluded that about 25% of workers do zero physical activity. According to Ms. Barry, "Seventy per cent of workers would prefer to be using their IT gadgets, rather than doing physical activity." She continues, "We're very concerned that sedentary behaviour is becoming a real risk for heart disease."

The human body is designed to move. Long periods of sitting cause the body to shut down metabolically, slowing circulation. In response, you use less of your blood sugar and burn less fat, increasing the risk of acquiring heart disease or diabetes.

So, how does one combat this trend in the workplace? One idea is to get a stand-up desk, which is placed atop your regular desk and allows you to continue to work on your computer from a standing position. Even just a couple of hours standing each day will produce positive health effects. The core and gluts are engaged, circulation improves, and posture is upright instead of hunched over a desk.

In addition to the stand-up desk, it is critical to incorporate a fitness plan into your daily routine. By spending even 30 minutes daily working out at the gym, walking, jogging, or dancing—some form of blend of aerobic activity and weight bearing exercise—will help to offset some of the detrimental effects of those eight hours in the office chair.

Instead of spending break time at work sitting in the lunchroom, throw on your sneakers and take a brisk 15-minute walk. You will burn some of those calories from the pastry you ate earlier, and will get your blood pumping, returning to your desk invigorated and energized.

Combating the inertia that results from physical inactivity is crucial in protecting your longevity and wellbeing. With a few minor changes in your workplace routines, and a new resolve to include physical activity into your free time, you can be healthier longer, improving your overall quality of life, both physically and mentally.