



## The dangers of too much sitting

Over the past century, there has been a dramatic shift in our day-to-day work environments. Our lives have become increasingly sedentary, due to shifting societal factors, and this transition has resulted in a range of relatively new health complications. Sedentary work environments come in direct contrast to the kinds of work that many previous generations did, much of which was active and manually intensive.

### Too much sitting is not good for our health

Being inactive is a recent phenomenon and doing so for long periods of time is not healthy. In fact, it's associated with increases in chronic diseases like type two diabetes, heart disease, obesity, osteoporosis, arthritis and some forms of cancer.

Researchers have found that prolonged sitting is associated with higher blood sugar levels, higher blood fat levels, larger waist sizes and a higher risk of metabolic syndrome—which results from clustering risk factors like abdominal obesity, high blood pressure and high blood sugar.

### Sitting—a way of life?

For many of us, the majority of our waking hours are spent sitting at desks, in cars or at home. All of this constitutes sedentary time.

It can be difficult to stay active when professional demands often require that you be sedentary more often than not. In many workplaces, employees sit at computer desks; bus drivers, pilots, train engineers and even some construction workers have sedentary jobs. Sitting has become not just an individual problem, but a societal one.

It doesn't just end at work. At home, many of us relax in front of the TV or recline in our favourite chair to read, sometimes for entire evenings. While most of us get a fair amount of light activity—like standing, walking indoors or doing light housework or gardening—on average, most adults spend

half of their waking hours sitting, and do not meet the recommended activity requirements for a healthy lifestyle.

### What we can do

An important step is recognizing that prolonged sitting is a health risk. Ideally, we should shift our focus from just trying to be active during our leisure time to being more active all of the time—including our time spent at work, at school or commuting to and from these places.

By participating in regular physical activity and reducing our time spent sitting, you can improve your health and reduce your likelihood of chronic disease. For best results, you should be making it a priority to do at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in sessions of at least 10 minutes.

Even active, healthy people can benefit from breaking up their sedentary hours. At the workplace, you can try things like walking or biking to work, taking the stairs instead of the elevator or hosting walking meetings in place of your regular ones. Even something as simple as walking to a co-worker's cubicle to talk to them, rather than sending another email, can contribute to a healthier lifestyle.

While sitting is not a bad thing in and of itself, sitting for prolonged periods exposes us to serious, chronic health conditions. Making your workdays even a little more active can go a long ways towards preventing this.

### Learn more

[Sitting and Sedentary Behaviours: A Public Health Problem?](#)

An exploration of the dangers of prolonged sitting.

[Physical Activity @ Work](#)

Tips and ideas for bringing physical activity into the workplace.

[Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work](#)

Common questions and answers about physical activity in the workplace.

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