



To Your HEALTH



WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

Move For Your Health! Every Little Bit Helps

Had an exhausting day? Think you deserve to kick back and relax? You might want to think again. If you're like most people nationwide, you've spent more than half of your waking hours sitting or inactive for long stretches of time—at work, at school, in the car or watching TV or another type of screen. Maybe it's time to try standing up instead of putting your feet up.

Scientists estimate that Americans ages 12 and up now spend most of their time—about 8 to 10 hours a day—sitting and doing things that require little energy. The groups who sit the most are teens and older adults.

What's so Bad about Sitting?

Sedentary behavior—which usually means sitting or lying down while awake—has been linked to a shorter lifespan and a wide range of medical problems.

When you sit for long periods, your body adapts to the reduced physical demand and

slows down its metabolism. When metabolism slows, you burn fewer calories and boost the chance that extra energy will be stored as fat.

The best way to raise your metabolism is simply by moving. The more you move, the better.

The Benefits of Movement

Studies have found that any time you get up and move, you're improving your chances for good health. When you're upright and active, even briefly, your body is at work. In fact, a recent study looked at data on more than 650,000 adults, mostly age 40 and older. The researchers found that leisure-time physical activity was linked to a longer life expectancy, regardless of how much people weighed. The study found that even a low level of physical activity—equivalent to about 10 minutes a day of walking—was associated with a gain of almost two years in life expectancy. High levels of activity—equivalent to about 45 minutes a day of walking—were associated with a gain of four years or more.

The many benefits of moderate to vigorous activity have been much studied. Moderate to vigorous exercise gets your heart pumping and boosts blood levels of “good” cholesterol. Moving at moderate to vigorous intensity also strengthens your bones and muscles and lessens your risk for a wide range of health problems, including stroke, diabetes, certain types of cancer, osteoporosis and arthritis.

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How Much Movement Do You Need?

Experts recommend that adults should aim to exercise at least two and a half hours a week at moderate intensity or 75 minutes a week at a vigorous level. You might exercise at moderate intensity for 30 minutes, five days a week, or try 45 to 60 minutes, three days a week. If your goal is to exercise for a half hour a day, you might break that up into shorter periods (of at least 10 minutes at a time) that add up to 30 minutes.

Although the benefits of intense activity are clear, less is known about the long-term impact of sedentary behavior. Since most people engage in a range of activities throughout each day, it can be challenging to tease apart the effects that sitting and non-exercise activity can have over time.

Scientists have had difficulty accurately monitoring how long and at what intensity people are actually moving each day. More than a decade ago, most studies of everyday activity relied on self-reports—like questionnaires or diaries of physical activity—which can be inaccurate. Today, mobile technologies—such as smart phone apps and electronic activity monitors—are helping scientists gather better data. Study participants wear these small devices all day long. They provide data on what people are actually doing as they move throughout their day.

Stand Up for Your Health

It's key to remember that you can alter your routine just a little bit every day so you'll move more and sit less. For example, don't use the phone or email if you can take a walk and talk to someone in person. Get yourself a step-counter and try to get in 10,000 steps a day. There are many ways to add movement without going to the gym.

The bottom line is, look for opportunities to be active throughout your day. Get moving as much as you can!

Sit Less, Move More

- » Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Park your car at the far end of the street or parking lot.
- » Have "walking meetings" with colleagues at work.
- » Rearrange your home so you can stand upright or walk on a treadmill while watching TV or using the computer.
- » Set an alarm on your computer to go off every hour and prompt you to move around for a minute or 2.
- » Try walking as if you're already late for the bus or an important meeting.
- » Have small weights in your office or around your home for doing arm exercises.

