

Research Report: How much physical activity counteracts sitting all day?

(From January 2017 newsletter)

Many of us spend most, if not all of our work day sitting. The health detriments to this are well documented. Sitting disease, as it known, has been linked to shorter lifespan, and higher rates of chronic disease such as diabetes and heart disease. It is thought that sitting affects the body's ability to regulate blood sugar, blood pressure and break down body fat.

Sitting all day appears to be a separate disease risk from inactivity. In fact, health experts have started to call for new public health guidelines that address reducing sitting time as well as increasing physical activity.

Not much research has focused on how to offset the effects of sitting. A new study however, begins to shed some light on the matter.

How much activity is needed to eliminate the effects of sitting all day?

The study* indicated that high amounts of activity eliminate the increased risk of death associated with sitting. People who get 60–75 minutes per day of moderate intensity physical activity seem to have no increased risk of death, even if they sit for more than eight hours a day.

This amount, however, is much higher than the 30 minutes of daily activity recommended in the current public health guidelines.

What about television?

TV viewing time seemed more problematic than daytime sitting. The researchers found that 60 -75 minutes of daily activity reduces but does not eliminate the risk associated with high TV-viewing time.

Another way to reduce risk

Previous studies have shown that breaking up sitting time during work hours appears to lower the risk of sitting. Worksite wellness recommendations include:

- 1) encourage workers to stand up and move for three minutes for every hour they sit.
- 2) Use sit/stand workstations.

Source: *Does physical activity attenuate, or even eliminate, the detrimental association of sitting time with mortality? A harmonised meta-analysis of data from more than 1 million men and women. Ulf Ekelund, Jostein Steene-Johannessen, Wendy J Brown, Morten Wang Fagerland, Neville Owen, Kenneth E Powell, Adrian Bauman, I-Min Lee, for the Lancet Physical Activity Series 2 Executive Committee* and the Lancet Sedentary Behaviour Working Group* Lancet 2016; 388: 1302–10.*