

Do you have a sedentary job?

A sedentary lifestyle
- and how it affects your health

The human body is built for motion

You are probably sitting down as you read this. Sitting can help your body relax after activity, but your body would like you to stand up again soon. Most of us sit too much. The average person in Denmark sits for more than eight hours a day. Many people with sedentary jobs sit for up to 15 hours a day.

This sedentary lifestyle is not good for our body. The human body's unique structure enables us to stand despite the force of gravity. Our blood flow is dependent on us being in motion, our skin is elastic so it moulds to our motion as we flex our arms and legs. Leading a sedentary lifestyle (particularly if we sit hunched over a PC, tablet, mobile phone or lie on the sofa) can affect our health, causing back pain, poor circulation and too much fat in the blood.

Not even one hour of daily exercise can counter the adverse health effects of sitting. Running, cycling and other types of exercise are great

for improving fitness, but they cannot counter the adverse health consequences of a long-term sedentary lifestyle.

Surprisingly, sitting still for long stretches of time not only has negative musculoskeletal effects, it also reduces lung capacity, as the lungs have less space to expand into in a sitting position. Your legs may swell and your weight may increase considerably.

A study in the "International Journal of Obesity and Related Metabolic Disorders" found that people who sat for long periods of time (7.4 hours a day or more) were significantly more likely to be obese than those who reported sitting for short periods (less than 4.7 hours a day).

A study in the "American Journal of Preventive Medicine" even found that the more hours a person sits at a desk at work, the greater the risk of being or becoming obese.



Did you know that:
A sedentary lifestyle
causes your metabolism
to "go to sleep".

It doesn't take very much

Small changes in your daily life can vastly improve your health. A little motion is 100% better than no motion.

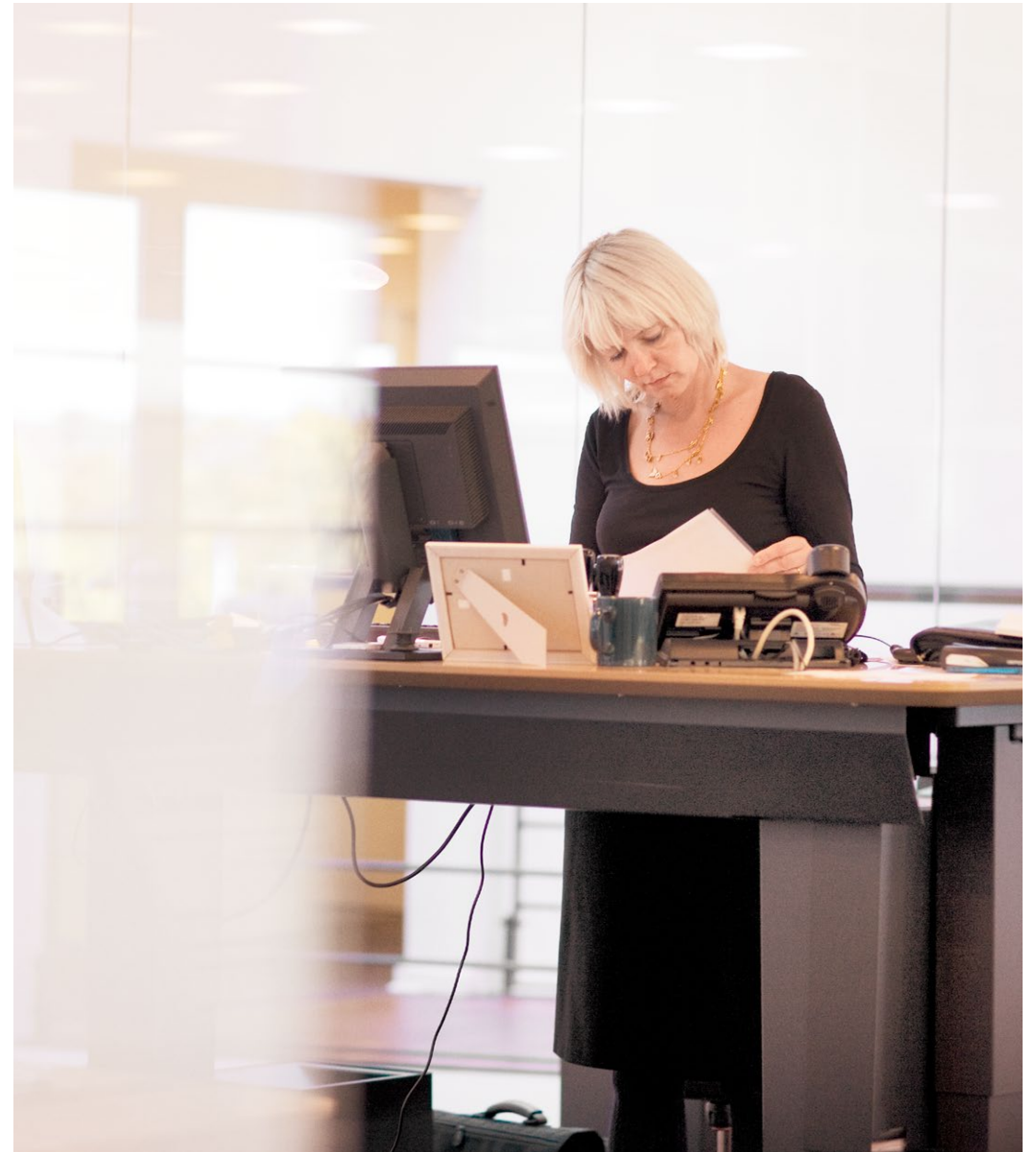
Standing up requires your muscles to work to support your weight, enough to double your metabolism, in fact.

The average person can actually burn 60 extra calories per hour just by standing at a sit/stand desk instead of sitting. Over the course of a day, this can produce massive positive health effects.



Motion eliminates pain and makes blood and oxygen flow to the brain.

The good news is that you have probably already taken the first step towards sitting less, which is to realise that you should probably not sit as much as you do.



Tips for sitting less and becoming healthier



Before going to work:

1. Is it possible for you to ride your bike to work or maybe ride it to the nearest station instead of being transported all the way?
2. Try parking your car in the parking space furthest away from the entrance.

While at work:

1. If you have a sit/stand table, try raising it each time you take a break, get coffee, go to a meeting or to lunch. This forces you to think about standing up for a bit when you return to your desk.
2. Set a timer to remind yourself to change working position at least every 90 minutes. Stand up, change position, stretch, walk around when on the phone.
3. Do walk & talk meetings, whenever possible.
4. If possible, do elastics exercises three times ten minutes a week.

After work:

1. Play active games with your children. Your children will love it, and you all get exercise. Play tag, hide-and-seek, race, go to the playground and join in, go to the beach and play in the sand or other active games.
2. Walk – set aside time to walk. Walk with your partner, husband, friend, parents, walk with your children cycling next to you or in their pram, walk while you are on the phone. Walking is a health elixir for the body (and the mind).



More motion in your daily life

We were made to walk a lot, and the motion of walking uses a lot of energy. Walk when you are meeting friends, or just get off the bus one stop before you normally do. You can also park your car at walking distance from anywhere you need to get to. It means more than you think, and your body will thank you for it.

By introducing these small changes in your daily life, you will feel major changes in your pain level, your well-being and your energy level.

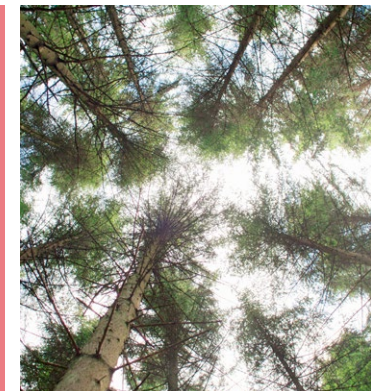
Are you too busy?

If you find that your daily life is too busy to introduce these small changes, remind yourself that your efforts serve a good and important purpose: YOU! And you are actually winning by moving! Motion eliminates pain and stimulates the flow of blood and oxygen to the brain, which makes you more focused and able to concentrate and be creative.



Our lifestyle has become so sedentary that 30 minutes exercise a day is not enough to counteract the ill effects of eight, nine or ten hours of inactivity.”

Genevieve Healy, PhD.



Sources

- Marc Hamilton, Ph.D., professor of biomedical sciences at the University of Missouri, Columbia.
- 2015: Fabiana Braga Benatti and Mathias Ried-Larsen: "The Effects of breaking up prolonged sitting time"
- TED-Ed: "Bodies are built for motion - not for stillness" (A short film and explanation)
- Videncenter for Arbejdsmiljø: "3 tips til en bedre pause". (September 2015. Referring to study from Baylor University.)
- NFA: "Meget stilletid på jobbet er relateret til ondt i nakke og lænd" (April 2015)
- National Institute of Public Health: "Take a stand - et interventionsstudie"
- Videncenter for Arbejdsmiljø: "Stillesiddende arbejde kan skade helbredet"
- Danske Fysioterapeuter, fysio.dk: "Stillesiddende adfærd er farlig" based on a 2012 report by Vidensråd for Forebyggelse. Download rapporten_stillesiddende_adfaerd_-_en_helbredsrisiko
- Ugeskrift for læger: "Sedentarisme: en ny udfordring for folkesundheden"
- WHO: "New physical activity recommendations for reducing disease and prevent deaths"
- <http://www.juststand.org/tabid/816/language/en-US/default.aspx>
- Birgitte Nymann, 2016, <http://www.birgittenymann.dk/birgittes-blog.php>

