

SIT LESS

LIVE LONGER

Sitting too much has a drastic effect on your health – but you can stand up and fight back!

You don't want to be sitting down when you read this. A study from the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* reports that, on average, every hour sitting watching TV after the age of 25 reduces the viewer's life expectancy by 21.8 minutes. It's time to sit up ... er ... to *stand up* and take notice.

SITTING PRETTY?

Since the 1950s life has become more and more about bums on seats. Simple things changed. The washing came indoors, as dryers replaced trips to the clothes line. TV taught us to sit down, shut up and watch, while urban-sprawl traffic made us sit longer and longer in our cars commuting to and from jobs that were more often behind desks. The latest Australian Health Survey found 80 per cent of Australians have to do some sitting at work.

Even socialising has become computerised. A 2017 survey found that Aussies are spending 19 hours a week on Facebook – and time using social media generally means time sitting down.

So, what can we change to get moving? >

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AUSTRALIANS
SIT ALMOST
10 HOURS
EACH DAY

Text: Natalie Flatoft & Melissa Meier. Photos: iStock.

45% OF US NAMED **WALKING** OUR MOST RECENT EXERCISE

DON'T SIT IT OUT

Less than half of Australian adults are sufficiently active, according to the Australian Healthy Survey.

Moving more can really help you lower your risk of diabetes. Studies have shown that by getting up every 20 minutes and strolling for two minutes, you can reduce your blood sugar levels by 30 per cent. So, next time you're on your mobile at home or work, stand up or pace around a bit – your body will love it.

TAKE A STAND AT WORK

There are plenty of other ways you can add extra movement to your day. For example, try climbing the stairs on arrival at work, after lunch, and to meet and talk to colleagues instead of emailing them.

Or take a tea-break. We already know tea has many health benefits, but by just taking a break from sitting, and going to the kitchen to pour a cuppa – along with the subsequent journeys to the loo – you're making your top brew an even bigger health booster.

Sitting at your desk or stuck in traffic? Squeeze your bottom cheeks together so that you rise in your seat, then let go and repeat. They're big muscles, so keeping them active is key to burning kilojoules and managing blood sugar levels. You can also do neck stretches and shoulder rolls to help improve posture.

STAND OUT AT HOME

TV's a problem? Instead of sitting through the ad breaks when you're watching the box, use them to get moving. Do a few stretches, water the plants, put on a load of washing, or take out the rubbish.

And next time you're taking public transport, pretend there are no seats on the bus or train and stand up for part of the trip. Or hop off a stop early and walk the remaining distance.

At home, forget about the dishwasher and wash and dry by hand – you're standing up, after all! Or grow your own herbs and vegies. You'll be on your feet digging, planting, watering and picking.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SIT?

When the powerhouse muscles of your lower body remain inactive, as they might when you're deskbound or stuck in traffic, your metabolism starts to change.

If you sit for a long period, particularly after eating a meal or a snack, the glucose and fat in your blood from that meal are taken up by your cells much more slowly than if your muscles were active and using this supply.

The resulting chain reaction goes like this: the high levels of glucose (or sugar) and fat in your blood stimulate the body's inflammatory response. That's your immune system kicking in to deal with a problem. But when it's called in too often (when each day involves lots of prolonged sitting), inflammation leads to oxidative stress. This causes damage to your cells and increases your risk of heart disease, diabetes and other health conditions.

All the more reason to take a stand for your health!



10 WAYS TOWARDS

10,000 STEPS

- 1 Park at the end of the carpark when visiting the shops.
- 2 Set your work PC to print at the furthest office printer.
- 3 Go for a walk at lunch time, and get some vitamin D too!
- 4 Set a reminder on your phone every hour to do a lap around the office.
- 5 Find a coffee shop a little further away than usual to pick up your morning brew.
- 6 Suggest or organise a trial 'walking meeting' instead of the normal desk-bound one.
- 7 If you're buying a takeaway, don't order home delivery. Walk there and pick it up!
- 8 Drink from a small glass at your desk instead of a large water bottle. You'll get in a few extra steps walking to the tap!
- 9 Cook for relaxation – when you chop, stir and portion food, you're moving around.
- 10 Buy a pedometer, or better still, download a free one. It's a real motivator to get moving every day. [hfg](#)