‘Stand up’ - for your health!

Have you heard the phrase, “Sitting is the new smoking”? What does that even mean? The thought behind this catchy phrase is to highlight the health risks of sitting too much – now known to be comparable with those of smoking.

What are the health risks of sitting? They include increased all-cause and cardiovascular disease mortality.1 Oftentimes we think of our health as things we are doing that may not be beneficial to our health, but it can also be things we are not doing that may lead to poorer health. Something as simple as getting up and moving every so often could lead to a longer, healthier life.

Although the focus of physical activity and moving more has been around for quite a while, the focus is now shifting to the increased risk of sitting for long periods of time.

“Importantly, adults can meet public-health guidelines on physical activity, but if they sit for prolonged periods of time, their metabolic health is compromised”1. It is recommended that adults get at least 150 minutes to 300 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity as well as 2 or more days a week of muscle-strengthening activities of moderate intensity.2 Therefore, ideally in addition to the recommended physical activity it is now recommended to move more and sit less. Sounds simple right? But in most of our current daily life, we may find that much of what we do revolves around sitting. Whether that is working at a desk, long commute times, driving for a living, or relaxing on weekends binge watching our favorite show we find ourselves often sitting for the majority of the day. How can we carve out a few minutes to get up and either stand or walk around? Some ideas are: set a reminder to get up and move or stretch, schedule walking meetings, put your phone on the other side of the room, stand up when you get a call or during a commercial, or walk through out your office or home during these times.

Let’s have our phones help us with our health. There are so many different apps out there but one that I started using is Stand Up! The Work Break Timer (iOS). This free app allows you to create your own personalized stand up reminder schedule. For instance, I have set it to remind me every 30 minutes to stand up for at least 5 minutes. This is especially helpful while I’m at work but even helps when I’m home relaxing. Another option for Androids is Randomly RemindMe. Whatever works for you to move more and move more often continue to do it until it becomes a habit and natural routine in your daily life. Creating new lifestyle habits that help us feel better and promote better health can also be encouraging to others around us so share your health habits with others and ask others what has worked for them.

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1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3404815/>
2. <https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf>