



Rehabilitation and
Retraining Trust

Sitting is the New Smoking



For the past two decades, doctors and research scientists have been studying the impact of sitting too much. The World Health Organisation now ranks physical inactivity- sitting too much- as the fourth biggest preventable killer globally, causing an estimated 3.2 million deaths annually.

Some experts believe that sitting for long periods is even more harmful than smoking. An Australian study in 2008 reported that every hour spent sitting watching television after the age of 25, reduced the viewer's life expectancy by 21.8 minutes. By comparison, smoking a single cigarette reduces life expectancy by 11 minutes.

It would be easier if exercise could undo the damage caused by sitting but many studies are demonstrating that the effects of long term sedentary behaviour aren't reversible through exercise. This means that if you eat well and exercise for an hour a day but then sit for all or most of your waking hours, the sedentary behaviour will chip away or even cancel out the benefits of your exercise.

We are designed to be a moving machine

Our bodies are built for movement which in turn keeps us healthy. The positions we assume for most of the day will impact how we move the rest of the day and the quality of our movement (or lack of movement) can affect our quality of life. When your muscles are immobile, your circulation slows. This in turn utilises less of your blood sugar and you burn less fat, which increases your risk of heart disease and diabetes.

The impact of movement — even leisurely movement — can be profound.

For starters, you'll burn more calories. This might lead to weight loss and increased energy. Even better, the muscle activity needed for standing and other movement seems to trigger important processes related to the breakdown of fats and sugars within the body. When you sit, these processes stall — and your health risks increase. When you're standing or actively moving, you kick the processes back into action.

Heart disease and diabetes aren't the only health hazards. The American Institute for Cancer Research now links prolonged sitting with increased risk of both breast and colon cancers.

"Sitting time is emerging as a strong candidate for being a cancer risk factor in its own right," says Neville Owen, Ph.D., head of the Behavioural Epidemiology Laboratory at Australia's Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute. Emerging evidence suggests that the longer you sit, the higher your risk.

Miracle-Gro for the brain

Our sedentary lifestyles are not just bad for our bodies but also bad for our brains. Dr John Ratey, a Harvard Medical School professor and author of *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, states that the brain responds like muscles. It grows with use and shrivels with inactivity. He says, "What's even more disturbing and what virtually no one realizes is that inactivity is killing our brains - physically shrivelling them up." Physical activity and movement are like "Miracle-Gro for the brain." He maintains that it encourages cell growth which slows the natural aging process later in life.

The key message is simple:

get moving
like your life
depends on it
because it does

- **Reduce optional sitting in your life.**
Only sit when necessary, if you've got an option to stand, do it!
- Work on a **30: 2 principle** – 30 minutes of sitting requires at least 2 minutes of movement.

Simple suggestions for decreasing your time spent sitting are: **stand up and move or stretch during TV advert breaks, stand or walk while on the phone, set an alarm on your watch to move every 30 minutes.**

If you have concerns or questions about making your lifestyle less sedentary please contact the physiotherapy team at PRRT.

If you would like to book an appointment with a Physiotherapist at PRRT then retired officers can self -refer by contacting PRRT directly on 02890427788. Serving offers can request a referral from their line manager through the Seapark Scheme. For more information about all PRRT services and how to access them, please visit our new website at www.prrt.org