

Drop the Remote and Step Away From the TV: Your Life May Depend on It

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Jack Rubinstein, MD

(PhysOrg.com) -- Ninety-nine percent of American households have at least one television, the majority of households have more than one, and the average American spends more than six hours a day watching them. UC Health cardiologists suggest ditching the remote in order to live a longer life.

Television, TV, telly or tube: No matter what you call it, the chances are that you watch it.

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"Although studies have focused on television watching, sedentary behavior in general is harmful to a person's health," says Jack Rubinstein, MD. "With [obesity](#), [hypertension](#) and diabetes affecting millions of Americans, we should try to be as active as possible every day."

Rubinstein cites a recent study that shows that each hour spent in front of the [television](#) increases risk of [premature death](#) by 11 percent and increases risk of death from [cardiovascular disease](#) by 18 percent.

"Many daily activities are now done sitting," he says. "Much of a person's day consists of shifting from the desk, to the couch, to the bed—one sedentary activity after another. This is why we must make time for exercise, any exercise, which not only promotes a healthy lifestyle but also leaves us with a strong heart."

People who exercise regularly and vigorously have the lowest risk for heart disease, but any exercise is beneficial. Rubinstein says studies consistently find that light to moderate exercise—such as taking a stroll around the neighborhood or doing housework—is beneficial for everyone, including those with existing heart disease.

He adds that even people who don't have a weight issue or problems with hypertension and [diabetes](#) should make time for [exercise](#).

"Studies show that across the board, sitting for long periods of time has unhealthy effects on blood sugar and blood fats," he says. "This is alarming. In order to live a healthy life, you must make physical activity a priority, along with eating right."

"So either hit the gym before sitting down for your favorite weekly TV drama, or just turn the tube off and play tag with your kids or take a walk with your spouse—make small improvements to get moving and get healthy."

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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