

Single men spend weekends sitting, watching TV

March 14 2012, By Randy Dotinga



Single, middle-aged people who live alone spend more time sitting. A new study, published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* discovered that men tended to sit for longer periods watching TV on the weekends while women sat for longer periods doing activities such as reading or dining out. Unemployed people tended to spend more time sitting than employed people. Sitting habits, which lead to risks of poor health, were found to vary by gender, age, health status and during weekdays versus weekends.

"Sitting is not the same for everyone," said study lead author Nicola Burton, Ph.D., a senior research fellow at The University of Queensland. "If we want to identify who does prolonged sitting, we need to think about the context of sitting and take into account group differences."

It's important to study sitting habits because research has begun to link them to health problems, Burton said. "While people may associate prolonged sitting with muscular problems such as back and neck pain, research evidence is emerging to suggest that prolonged sitting—a total of more than 6-8 hours a day or watching television more than 4 hours a day—is in itself also potentially harmful for cardiovascular and metabolic health."

Among other things, she said, researchers have linked lots of sitting to high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes and higher death rates. Studies suggest that sitting causes problems even in people who exercise, she said.

The study authors analyzed survey responses from 7,719 people aged 40 to 65 in Australia who were asked about their daily activities. The researchers found that people sit longer on weekends than on weekdays, and sitting habits among groups differed depending on what they did while sitting. The findings would probably be similar in other Western countries like the United States, Burton said.

"The next step is to develop and evaluate strategies to reduce [sitting time](#), and see what works for whom, and in what context," she said. "This is different from strategies to increase exercise, as sitting time can be exchanged for things other than exercise."

Is it really possible to neither sit nor exercise? Yes, Burton said. "Some research is suggesting that interrupting sitting time is important, so people could think about how to break up [sitting](#) for light activity that is not exercise, like doing things around the house during TV commercial breaks or taking standing or walking breaks during the working day."

Susan B. Sisson, an assistant professor who studies diet and exercise at the University of Oklahoma said the findings are important because they

can be used to figure out how best to coax people to not sit so much. "For example, this study found that individuals that are single and living alone sit more... A media campaign telling people to do on a walk with their spouse would likely not be as effective in this group."

More information: Burton N, et al. (2012). Mid-Aged Adults' Sitting Time in Three Contexts. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, In Press.

Provided by Health Behavior News Service

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