

Psssst, pull up a chair; no, wait, that might be killing you

February 6 2015, by Addam Schwartz, The Philadelphia Inquirer

Ready for some bad news? I hope you're sitting down. Well, actually, you might want to stand up, because sitting down IS KILLING YOU RIGHT NOW!

Yes, in their quest to establish that no behavior is without either medical benefit or potential for harm, top medical scientists have established that sitting can be hazardous to your health. Not as an imminent threat, like running with scissors or eating discount sushi or wearing a Chris Christie T-shirt to an Eagles game, but dangerous nonetheless.

CBS News reported that sitting for lengthy periods was linked to "increased risk for [heart disease](#), diabetes, cancer, and early death - even in people who get regular exercise." The risks appear worse for people who sit eight or nine hours a day, particularly if those hours are spent watching CBS News.

Now, there "are places where the whole sitting-puts-you-in-danger idea makes sense. The middle of I-95, for instance. The bottom of a swimming pool. A theater showing an Adam Sandler film. In front of a TV when Sean Hannity is on. (Or at my next family dinner, thanks to that Sean Hannity joke.)

But sedentary tendencies have been part of our culture since the earliest human progenitors first rose on two legs, gingerly took a few tentative steps, then plopped down on a primitive couch to watch football.

The annals of history are filled with great moments in sitting: Protests at lunch counters (1950s). Swamis on mountaintops (1960s). Santas at shopping malls (Thanksgiving through Christmas). Grandpas in recliners (pretty much always).

What complicates things is that medical science can't seem to make up its mind about anything. The nation's top medical researchers are as confused and indecisive as the guys on "The Bachelor," though thankfully they're wearing lab coats and not swim trunks.

When I was growing up, for instance, marijuana was a dangerous drug that would lead you down the path of addiction, destructive behavior, and cravings for Cheetos. Today, pot has been effectively decriminalized in Philadelphia, and you can get a prescription for it in many places. Experts now say it's good for what ails you, especially if what ails you is a Cheetos deficiency.

Recent studies have also found that alcohol will either prolong your life or end it prematurely. Chocolate offers delicious protection and delicious peril. Coffee is both a threat and a boost to your longevity.

(Full disclosure: I am seated as I type this, sipping a cup of coffee and noshing on a Hershey bar. Which means I might either live forever or die at any moment. If it's the latter, no worries: The rest of this space will be filled with outtakes from a Zumba ad.)

Clearly the next medical frontier to be examined is something we all do every day: breathing. Even now, some hotshot analyst is doubtless making the connection between a person's regular intake of air and the fact that someday, inevitably, that person will die. And BuzzFeed is putting together a list of 17 Ways Oxygen Is Invisibly Shortening Your Life.

There's only one logical conclusion: Science is hazardous to your mental health.

And I, for one, won't stand for it.

©2015 The Philadelphia Inquirer

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC

Citation: Pssst, pull up a chair; no, wait, that might be killing you (2015, February 6) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-02-pssst-chair.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.