

# Can't sit still while reading this? Keep fidgeting. Research says it's good for your health

September 23 2016, by Lisa Gutierrez, The Kansas City Star

---

Finally, science comes to the rescue of those of us who have been told all our lives to "sit still."

Turns out fidgeting can be good for your health.

A study from researchers at the University of Missouri found that mild toe-tapping while seated can dramatically cut your risk of [cardiovascular disease](#).

That's big news for a society that seems to be spending a lot of time in a seated position, sometimes even sitting for more than 10 hours a day. Thanks, Netflix.

"Many of us sit for hours at a time, whether it's binge watching our favorite TV show or working at a computer," Jaume Padilla, an assistant professor of nutrition and [exercise physiology](#) at MU and lead author of the study, said in a statement about the study.

"We wanted to know whether a small amount of leg fidgeting could prevent a decline in leg vascular function caused by prolonged sitting."

The results were published this spring by the *The American Journal of Physiology - Heart and Circulatory Physiology*.

Researchers used 11 healthy young male and female college students for the study. According to The New York Times, researchers measured the level of normal [blood flow](#) through one of the main arteries in their legs to see how well the artery responded to changes in blood pressure.

Then each subject sat at a desk for three hours, without getting up.

They were asked to fidget one leg intermittently, tapping one foot for one minute then resting it for four. The other leg stayed stationary, foot flat on the floor. On average, the participants moved their feet 250 times per minute.

The result? After 3 hours of sitting, the fidgety leg had much higher blood flow than the other.

The researchers concluded that even this little bit of movement could help stimulate vascular health.

"While we expected fidgeting to increase blood flow to the lower limbs, we were quite surprised to find this would be sufficient to prevent a decline in arterial function," said Padilla.

In the real world, though, they recommend tapping both legs while seated to boost blood flow.

Though fidgeting clearly has its benefits, Padilla and his colleagues said it's not a substitute for getting up and walking.

"You should attempt to break up sitting time as much as possible by standing or walking," Padilla said.

"But if you're stuck in a situation in which walking just isn't an option, fidgeting can be a good alternative. Any movement is better than no

movement."

©2016 The Kansas City Star (Kansas City, Mo.)

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Can't sit still while reading this? Keep fidgeting. Research says it's good for your health (2016, September 23) retrieved 10 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-09-fidgeting-good-health.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.