

How to sit less, move more

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(HealthDay)—Even if you're parked in front of a computer during the day, new research suggests that some simple changes can offset the health damage of all that sitting.

"Even if we exercise regularly, most of us sit or recline for an average of 11 hours a day," said researcher Wuyou Sui, a [doctoral student](#) in the department of kinesiology at the University of Western Ontario.

"Our bodies just aren't designed to function well with such low levels of activity—we all have to move more often than we do, or endure a variety of chronic [health](#) issues," Sui said in a university news release.

The researchers recruited university students to undergo a six-week program designed to change [sedentary behavior](#). The students had to choose the strategies that were most effective in forcing them to stand and take more frequent breaks from their desk work, such as setting timers and using phone reminders.

After the program ended, the students transformed their cues into healthy habits, taking breaks of at least once an hour, on average, the study showed. Before the program, they tended to sit more than 90 minutes at a time.

"We can build into our day some simple strategies to bring us out of our chairs and off our couches," said study co-author Harry Prapavessis, director of the Exercise and Health Psychology Lab at Western. "It may or may not make us more productive—we suspect it does, but the jury is still out on that one—but we know the health impact of getting to our feet is a positive one."

The researchers noted that two weeks after the study ended, the students continued to sit for shorter periods of time, incorporating the techniques they'd learned from the program into their daily routine.

These habits included standing during phone calls, making more frequent but shorter trips to the water fountain, and replacing emails with walking discussions.

"It's human nature to stumble when trying to add new activities to a busy day, which is why diets and exercise resolutions sometimes fall flat," Sui said. "This study shows we can combat 'occupational sitting' not by adding a new activity but by sliding a substitute regimen into the place of an existing one."

Health experts often refer to too much sitting as the new smoking.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides more information on [physical activity](#).

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