

# Worldwide consensus on the terminology that supports research into sedentary behavior

10 June 2017

A worldwide network of scientists examining the links between sedentary lifestyles and health problems such as obesity and cardiovascular disease today announced a new dictionary of terms to support research into sedentary behaviour.

The results of the 'terminology consensus project' led by the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute's (CHEO RI) Sedentary Behaviour Research Network (SBRN) are published today in the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* in a paper co-authored by 84 scientists from 20 countries.

"This is the world's most extensive agreement to date on consensus definitions for researchers examining sedentary [behaviour](#), an emerging global public [health](#) priority," said lead author Dr. Mark Tremblay, director of the CHEO RI's Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group (HALO) and a professor at the University of Ottawa. "There is an urgent need for clear, common and accepted terminology worldwide to facilitate the interpretation and comparison of research. We have made tremendous progress by defining terms such as physical inactivity, stationary behaviour, sedentary behaviour, and screen time. These terms have already been translated into several languages for rapid global uptake."

The paper, entitled "Sedentary Behaviour Research Network: Terminology Consensus Project Process and Outcome", provides refined definitions to suit all age groups, including babies, young children and people with chronic disease or mobility impairment. It also describes how bouts, breaks and interruptions should be defined and measured in the context of assessing sedentary behaviour and in relation to health outcomes.

The conceptual framework described in the paper also illustrates how both energy expenditure and posture are important components and how the terms relate to movement behaviours throughout a 24-hour period, including physical activity and sleep. Examples provided distinguish between active and passive sitting, active and passive standing, sedentary and stationary behaviour, screen time and non-screen-based sedentary time. Sedentary behaviour for a baby, for example, includes sitting in a car seat with minimal movement and, for a toddler, watching TV while sitting, reclining or lying down.

The 84 SBRN co-authors, which include researchers, trainees, graduate students, health practitioners and government employees, agree that standardization of the terminology is crucial to advancing future research, especially since this rapidly growing field of health science involves multi-disciplinary researchers, practitioners and industries.

"These consensus definitions will help scientists and practitioners navigate and understand the rapidly evolving field of sedentary behaviour research, allowing for more consistent and robust exploration of behaviours across 24 hours - sleep, sedentary behaviours and various intensities of physical activity - and may facilitate future research exploring ways to alter behaviours to improve health," Dr. Tremblay said. "Our hope is that these will reduce confusion and advance research related to sedentary behaviour and, ultimately, promote healthy active living."

[Dr. Tremblay will chair a discussion of the project's findings at a workshop today at the International Society of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity annual meeting in Victoria, British Columbia.](#) Consensus definitions have been translated into

French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Korean,  
German, Greek, Traditional Chinese, and  
Japanese.

Provided by Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario  
Research Institute

APA citation: Worldwide consensus on the terminology that supports research into sedentary behavior  
(2017, June 10) retrieved 7 May 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-06-worldwide-consensus-terminology-sedentary-behavior.html>

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