

Stand up for yourself – prepare for a cultural change



*Reading this could potentially
increase your life span*

Can sitting be an illness?

It is well known that sitting for long hours can lead to problems like back pain, bad circulation in the legs, neck and shoulder tension, and headaches. It can also make us unfit.

Ergonomic advice on how to sit better through the correct set up of work stations together with better office and car seats can definitely make a difference on muscle tension and pain. There is also no doubt about that working out during leisure time can help you to keep fit..

But more and more reports have recently been published that modern society is facing a new serious disease that can shorten our average

lifespan by three years or more. Not just through work alone, but also because of a shift to seated activities during our time when not working. The average citizen in the Western Industrial world spends about 15 hours per day seated. But when we sit for longer than 20 minutes without getting up and moving around – using our large muscles of the legs – our metabolism starts slowing down. We are burning less energy.

This can easily lead to cardiovascular disease, obesity, increased cholesterol and diabetes type 2.

It is called ***Sitting Disease*** – you can find numerous articles and research results online.

**It can only be avoided by sitting less,
but it does not mean that you have to
stand for hours.**

Are humans made for sitting ?

Human have sat to rest, eat or be social, but only for the last hundred years have we sat down for the majority of clerical and production tasks. Before that, sitting was a privilege of the ruling class or for those who had tasks which required a very steady hand, like sowing and calligraphy.

- Pros: Stillness of hand, Accuracy, Support and Comfort, Less strain on feet and legs, Ease for older people or those suffering with joint problems, or spinal problems, Safety when eating
- Cons: Decrease in metabolic rate – feeling colder, Weight gain, Risk to get diabetes and vascular disease or a blood clot in the legs, Increase in musculoskeletal tension and lack of fitness-Loss of strength, Tiredness, Varicosis or piles, Constipation, Increased mortality and Shortening of life

How much is too much?

Research has shown that office workers sit for about 15 hours per day, as for many most of their time off work is also spent seated (travel to work, meals, entertainment, hobbies, TV and social media) – and even children spend more and more time sitting still.

This is alarming because of

- The increase in health risks cannot be fully compensated for by regular exercise
- The decrease of the metabolic rate after 20 minutes of sitting (less than 1.5 METs)

The solution: Stand up for yourself!

Interrupt any seated activity every 20-30 minutes (this advice has been around for some years)

- **At work:** visit colleagues, get a glass of water, don't eat at your desk, print small amounts at one time and fetch them from the printer – use one on another floor, use the stairs, stand up for phone calls, take a walking thinking break – 'philosophers corridor', use your up/down desk
At home: (ditch the remote control, do not snack at the TV – use advert breaks to get drink or food, adopt active hobbies, meet friends for a walk and talk, share housework, walk to shop with trolley-case
- Sit actively, fidget or rock when standing up is not an option

Your Benefits

- Increased metabolism, increased lifespan likely, better circulation, better concentration, , more creativity, less tension, better mood, healthier weight

A height adjustable desk can further improve your health as it allows you a correct working height when sitting or standing – and you can do tasks like writing or working at the computer standing up

Do we know how to stand well or do we have to learn it again?

Points to consider

- Adjust slowly like you would to a new exercise regime
- Short spells and frequent change of posture and position is best
- Look after your feet - supportive comfortable shoes, no or low heels, use insoles or heel cushions if you have problems with your feet
- Look after your legs, especially if you suffer from varicosis, wear mild support stockings or tights (flight socks, grade one support or supportive nylons for women)
- If you suffer from low blood pressure: change position often, exhale deeply occasionally, monitor blood glucose, drink plenty water, do a little tip toeing from time to time
- Sore back from standing? Adjust point of gravity, avoid hollow back, stand actively and also avoid standing too still
- Adjustable desks do not mean that you have to stand most of the day – it is an option, but care needs to be taken to not overdo this at the beginning.

For a correct, relaxed, and yet focused stance take the example of the Delphi Charioteer (470 BC) as pictured on top of the newsletter

- Find your individual neutral position– don't lean forward, don't stoop
- Relax the back – load your heels at least with half of your weight
- Stand tall
- Position of the feet – offload the knees, load both feet evenly
- You can try a step position stance if you prefer
- Position your desk at elbow height