

From the Health Clinic



Can I send my child to school if he's not feeling well?

What is Sitting Disease?



The sitting disease is related to the increasing epidemic of sitting down for too long. Experts believe that our sedentary lifestyles are having a tremendous negative impact on our health, playing a part in causing long-term and serious complications, including;

- Obesity,
- Type II diabetes
- Heart disease
- A higher risk of getting certain kinds of cancer

The adverse health risks of sitting down for extended periods have long been established, and although the term sitting disease is gathering momentum, and regularly used by medical professionals; it is yet to be officially recognized as a diagnosable condition. However, this is probably only a matter of time, with

increasing evidence to suggest that sitting down specifically, as opposed to just general inactivity, is extremely harmful for our long-term health.

Why Are Our Teens At Risk?

As humans, we are not designed to sit down for vast periods of time, yet advances in modern technology have meant that we now do so many things in a perched position than we ever did before.

Sitting down for too long can affect any age group, with research suggesting that on average, we are spending six or more hours a day sitting down; the longer you are sedentary, the more likely you are to notice its effect. One worrying aspect of sitting disease is that even if you exercise and are a healthy weight, the benefits associated with an active lifestyle are counteracted if you spend too long sitting down.

When you count up how many hours teens are sedentary, from the long hours at school, to TV and watching movies, or sitting at a computer desk, or on the phone, it can add up to a staggering amount of time spent sitting. On average, teenage girls spent as many as *19 hours* every day either lying or sitting down.

Get Your Body Moving

The good news is that prevention is fairly simple: get your body to move more! Encouraging research has shown that getting up for just one minute at regular intervals can greatly reduce the conditions associated with sitting down for too long. Even working out before or after school may not compensate for extended sitting. The key is to get up and stand or move once a half hour, at least, during the day.

It's easy to become engrossed in a movie, or sit for extended periods playing video games, so if you want to live a healthy life, why not set an alarm to ensure you get up and move around at regular intervals?

There are simple ways to get moving a little more: you could;

- Walk the dog
- Combine doing a household chore with watching a movie, such as dusting
- Stand whenever you are talking or texting on your phone
- Mow the yard
- Rake the yard
- Shovel snow
- Vacuum the house

- When doing homework, stand up at least once a half hour

A significant portion of our days are spent sitting;

- Driving, instead of walking
- Sitting in the classroom
- Doing homework
- Leisure time-which includes talking on the phone, texting, and being on the computer

Sitting is now considered the new smoking. Some of the effects on your body are:

Trouble with thought process-“Foggy brain”

Moving muscles pump fresh blood and oxygen through the brain and trigger the release of all sorts of brain- and mood-enhancing chemicals. When we are sedentary for a long time, everything slows, including brain function

Strained neck

If most of your sitting occurs at a desk at school, or home, craning your neck forward toward a keyboard or hunched over playing video game it can cause curvature of the spine.

Sore shoulders and back

The neck does not slouch alone. Slumping forward overextends shoulder and back muscles as well, particularly the trapezius, which connects the neck and shoulders.

Bad back - Inflexible spine

When we move, soft discs between vertebrae expand and contract like sponges, soaking up fresh blood and nutrients. But when we sit for a long time, discs are squashed unevenly. Collagen hardens around tendons and ligaments.

Muscle degeneration

- **Mushy abs** - When you stand, move or even sit up straight, abdominal muscles keep you upright. But when you slump in a chair, they go unused. Tight back muscles and wimpy abs form a posture-wrecking alliance that

can exaggerate the spine's natural arch, a condition called hyperlordosis, or swayback.

- **Tight hips** - Flexible hips help keep you balanced, but chronic sitters so rarely extend the hip flexor muscles in front that they become short and tight, limiting range of motion and stride length. Studies have found that decreased hip mobility is a main reason elderly people tend to fall.
- **Limp glutes** - Sitting requires your glutes to do absolutely nothing, and they get used to it. Soft glutes hurt your stability, your ability to push off and your ability to maintain a powerful stride.

But, there may be more to consider than just this. Moving around more during your day has been shown to make people more creative and focused, and decreases illness. Walking indoors or outdoors increases creativity and the flow of ideas anywhere from 80 to 100 per cent.

How do you increase your activity during the day?

- Take short, active breaks during the day
- Stand while talking on the phone
- Follow the '20-20' rule – for every 20 minutes spent sitting, get up and stretch for 20 seconds
- Engage in physical activity by joining an athletic team
- Find an activity, such as swimming as biking, that you enjoy

SCREEN TIME HEALTH RISKS

Much of the sitting that teens are doing today is in front of a screen; whether it is a TV, computer screen or I-phone. Teens spend an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes a day using media (such as watching TV, listening to music, surfing online, and playing video games) which are sedentary activities. Too much screen time is bad for your health on many different levels and must be looked at as something to do less frequently and hopefully reverse any health issues. Besides the health effects of sitting too much; there are health effects to being in front of a screen too often.

Sleep Deprivation

Without question the electronic screens of many devices are causing a crisis of sleep deprivation for all age groups. Kids and teens need more sleep than adults due to their developing body and mind. The average child needs 10-12 hours of sleep each night in order for them to grow and develop properly, but screen time is shaving off hours of that much-needed sleep time. The average child is constantly sleep deprived and trying to learn, grow and develop on 6-8 hours of sleep per night at the most.

Children who sleep with electronic devices in their bedroom get less sleep than those who leave the devices in another room of the home at night. Not only are the children playing games and texting when they should be asleep, but the blue light emitted from the devices hinders sleep even after the device is shut off.

All electronics will emit a blue light from the screen. These include:

- Cell phones,
- Tablets,
- iPads
- TVs

The body interprets that blue light as daylight and the brain sends out the signal to wake up. Instead of being sleepy at bedtime, the child is now wide awake even when the electronic screen is shut off.

A child who is suffering from sleep deprivation will typically be;

- Cranky,
- Have an increased risk of obesity
- Have a short attention span
- Lack decision-making skills
- Have increased health problems
- Be lethargic and do poorly in school

Additional side effects that go along with sleep deprivation are:

- **Obesity**- The sedentary nature of screen time, combined with ads for high-calorie junk food, often leads to obesity
- **Vision problems** – there is a 20/20/20 rule for those who spent long hours in front of a screen – every 20 minutes look at something 20 feet away for 20

seconds. The majority of kids won't take their eyes off the electronic screen for 20 seconds, resulting in eye strain and vision problems.

- **Loss of social skills** - Social skills, people skills and the ability to interact with others of all ages is lacking in kids who spend too much interacting with an electronic device and have limited face-to-face contact with people.
- **Aggression** - Studies show that teens that spend a lot of time watching violent TV shows and/or playing violent video games are far more likely to be aggressive both in the home and at school.

Get Up and Move

Until recently, experts considered the antidote to sitting disease to be formal exercise sessions. But new research is turning that thinking on its head. As it turns out, just being up and about throughout the day can be healthier for you than doing a rigorous workout, then sitting the rest of the time.

This new thinking is important. It means that if you can live with greater vitality throughout your day, you can get all the health benefits, and more, than people working out in a gym but otherwise being inactive.

It's all about mixing it up. Metabolism slows down 90 percent after 30 minutes of sitting. The enzymes that move the bad fat from your arteries to your muscles, where it can get burned off, slow down. The muscles in your lower body are turned off. And after two hours, good cholesterol drops 20 percent. Just getting up for five minutes is going to get things going again

Walk faster. If there's just one change you can make to get more fitness out of your days, it's to pick up the pace each and every time you walk, whether it's going down a hallway, or getting to your car.

Take the stairs. If you have access to stairs, consider this: Walking just two flights of stairs daily burns enough calories to melt six pounds in a year. In fact, climbing stairs for two minutes, five days a week provides the same calorie burn as a 36-minute walk. Consider setting yourself a quota of say, 60 stairs per day (a typical staircase has 10 steps, so that's six flights).

Dance. Move to the music at every opportunity, even if it's just swaying to music on your own while you study. Dancing is both joyful and healthy; you don't need a dance floor, special occasion, or even a partner to do it.

Build in a little exercise. See who can do the most push-ups or leg lifts during commercial breaks, or schedule activity breaks from gaming.

Set a timer on your phone- when the timer goes off (which should be at least 10 times in a day, try to walk around for 3 minutes. That's 30 minutes total per day. Make sure the times set do not interfere with class time.

