

# Take a Stand on Sitting



The root meaning of the word sedentary is 'to sit'. The human body was not designed to sit for long periods of time. It was designed to stand and move.

Examples of sitting activities include:

- Reading
- Sewing or knitting
- Playing word games
- Doing crafts
- Watching TV
- Using electronics

Prolonged sitting, even while doing leisure activities, may:

- Decrease muscle activity in your legs, back, and stomach.
- Reduce the energy your body uses at rest.
- Decrease levels of good cholesterol (HDL).
- Increase levels of fat found in your blood (triglycerides).
- Reduce the rate at which enzymes break down fat.
- Reduce the effects of insulin, which helps regulate your blood sugar level.

The effects of excessive sitting can increase the risk of developing heart disease and diabetes. This increased risk is seen even if there is no increase in weight, waist circumference, or BMI and regardless of physical activity or active play levels. Bouts of physical activity may not 'fix' or 'undo' large bouts of sitting time.

Although, it is important not to undervalue sitting leisure activities, as they play an important role in your overall wellness. Leisure activities build self-esteem, reduce stress and contribute to mental wellness. However, it is important to have appropriate limits on sitting time for both you and your child.

## Tips to Help Limit Sitting Time

### Take a Standing Break

A standing break should last at least 5 minutes and occur at least once an hour.

### Sneak It In

Stand whenever possible throughout the day.

- Stand when talking or texting on the phone
- Stand while waiting (i.e. stand while waiting for an appointment)
- Stand when using portable devices (such as an iPad or smart phone)
- Stand during commercials when watching TV

### Schedule It In

Reflect on your day and find ways to break up prolonged periods of sitting.

### Change Your Space

Move things around to promote standing.

- Place your computer on a counter top where you can stand
- Use a portable home phone to allow you to stand or move while talking
- Create a play-friendly home that has space for you and your children to move and stand
- Listen to lively music at home – it will encourage everyone to move

### Go Outside

Being outdoors encourages you to move and play. Spending time in nature offers many benefits, such as boosting your immune system and reducing levels of stress and anxiety.



### Be a Role Model

Children will often follow your lead and sit when you sit. Be a role model in your home, school, or work – stand whenever possible.

It is important for you and your children to work towards a healthy balance between sitting leisure activities and standing, active play or other forms of physical activity. Talk to your children about the effects of sitting on our health. Explain that in order to stay healthy, it is important to sit less and move more.