Why Sitting on Your Ass All Day is Killing You

The good news: You're not dead. I can tell because you're reading this.

The bad news: If you sit on your ass all day like most Americans, you are going to die much sooner than you'd like.

The Journal of the National Cancer Institute published a large review which pretty much confirms what some health experts have been trying to tell us for years: Sitting can kill you.

This published review outlines a very large meta-analysis conducted at the University of Regensburg in Germany which analyzed data that amounted to over 4 million participants' answers to questions regarding their sitting habits and incidences of cancer. In examining nearly 70,000 cancer cases, researchers found…

… are you sitting down? Well then you may wanna stand…

… prolonged sitting was linked to a 24% increased risk of colon cancer, a 32% increased risk of endometrial cancer, and a 21% increased risk of lung cancer.

What Exactly are We Doing on Our Asses All Day?

Forget hunting and gathering, it wasn't that long ago in our evolution that our ancestors spent the day working in the fields, tending to cattle and other livestock, and generally staying busy with tasks that kept them clothed, fed and alive.

Today's modern person leads a completely different and sedentary lifestyle. Sitting has become glamourized over the decades. "Please, have a seat," "Sit down and take a load off," and "Sit and relax," are said with good intentions, and over the years, we have gotten into the habit of sitting every chance we get.

The average office worker sits for about 8 hours each day, staring at a computer screen, making calls, eating lunch and answering emails. Of course before this employee can even sit for that long they first had to sit in their car for anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour to get to work, and then they'll sit that long to get back home.

Once home what do most people do? Sit down with family for dinner, then get up, move to the sofa where they will sit for two to four hours binge-watching really bad television. And the next day they will do it all over again.

Overwhelming Evidence Shows Many Health Problems Are Associated With Sitting

Dr. James Levine is the director of the Mayo Clinic-Arizona State University Obesity Solutions Initiative. He's also the guy who invented the treadmill desk. Why did he invent the treadmill desk?

Because after studying the adverse effects of an increasingly sedentary lifestyle for years, he discovered something incredibly disturbing: *"Sitting is more dangerous than smoking, kills more people than HIV and is more treacherous than parachuting. We are sitting ourselves to death."* Well that's a buzzkill.

Levine is not alone in his findings. Other researchers point to evidence that suggests prolonged sitting not only increases our risk for developing certain cancers, already mentioned, but other serious diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Another study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* found that individuals who sat more than 6 hours a day died earlier than people who only sat for about 3 hours a day from cardiovascular disease.

And research published in the journal *Diabetologia* found that for every hour spent sitting, people increased their risk of developing type-2 diabetes by 3.4%. This percentage rose significantly, up to 30%, when people spent an entire day sitting, binge-watching TV.

Why Does Sitting Cause These Health Problems?

Sitting wreaks havoc on our bodies and health in a couple of different ways:

First, when we are sedentary for a good chunk of the day, we only burn about one calorie every minute, which leads to quick weight gain. If you've spent any time with your head out of your ass over the last decade you would have heard that excess weight is one of the biggest causes of a host of chronic illnesses. Obesity promotes insulin resistance as well as bodily inflammation, and these are two things that are known to increase your risk of developing type 2 diabetes and cancer in particular.

Second, when we sit more than we move, our muscles "live" in a state of inactivity, and this causes harmful biological signaling. Active muscles produce some really beneficial molecules and processes that keep our bodies working properly and using energy efficiently. When these signals are shut off through

muscular inactivity, our bodies lose their ability to do certain healthful things like remove noxious fats from our bloodstream. We also inadvertently suppress a gene that controls inflammation and blood clotting.

Here's Something Disturbing: Exercise DOES NOT Reverse the Deadly Effects of Sitting All Day

<u>Listen up because this section is the most important one!</u>

That gene I just mentioned… after a day of sitting it gets shut off and exercise is unable to turn it back on. Think about that.

If you've been reading this article with a smirk on your face and a roll in your eyes thinking, "Luckily I don't have to worry about any of this because I do yoga three times a week and hike sometimes on the weekend with my BFF," like… OMG… you're as likely to die young as the rest of us.

If you have one of those jobs that causes you to sit in front of a computer all day, and you have a long commute, and then you sit for hours at night watching Game of Thrones, the 5 hours of exercise you get at the gym every week **will not save your life**. It may help your thighs look better in a pair of skinny jeans, and, admittedly, that's not nothing, but exercise (whether it's running, pilates, biking, kayaking, basketball, kickboxing, whatever) will **not reverse the risks of sitting for hours every day**.

So, if you're serious about being healthy, you won't blindly ignore this article.

Ways to Get Off Your Ass More Throughout the Day

All is not lost. You and I simply need to find ways to stand or be more active throughout the day. For instance, as I type this profoundly informative and life-saving article, I do so from a standing position using a special mat that keeps my feet, legs and back comfortable.

There are other very easy ways you can sit less and move more throughout the day:

- Coffee addicts take note: use a smaller cup instead of that giant mug. This will force you to get up more often to get a refill from the kitchen or cafeteria.
- Drinking more water is not only better for your health but it will also force you to have to get up and walk to the restroom more often as well.
- And while we're talking about using the restroom – why use the closest one at the end of the hall? Why not take the stairs one flight up and use the restroom up there instead?

- Make sure to walk on your lunch break. You can spend 20 minutes walking around the city or neighborhood to work up an appetite and then the next 40 minutes eating.
- Don't text or email your co-worker that's right down the hall, get off your ass and go ask them your question in person.
- Take a walking meeting instead of sitting in the stuffy conference room.
- Use apps that will alert you when you've been sitting too long. You may be able to ignore that voice in your head, but it's harder to ignore those beeps or vibrating alarms.
- Use a treadmill desk. You can also slowly walk on a treadmill while gaming or watching TV.
- No space for a treadmill desk? No problem. Get a little under-desk-cycle to keep you active at your desk.
- Better yet, get a FitDesk which is basically a stationary bike that can hold your laptop so you can pedal while you work.
- And, as I mentioned, you can use a standing desk. I personally have a silver metal wire shelving unit that I adjusted to be just the right height and my mat is in front. I'll stand for about 2 hours and then sit for 20 minutes or so. If you have the budget for a standing desk, great. If not, you can easily use whatever you have on hand, wood, a milk crate, old books, to elevate your laptop so you can comfortably stand and work at your normal desk.

If you've actually taken the time to read this entire article, which consists of 1451 words, which is a decent amount of words, and you're NOT going to follow any of these tips so you can live a longer and healthier life, something is seriously wrong with you.