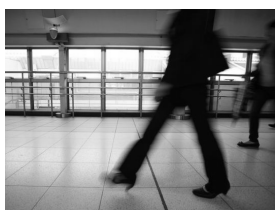


Too much sitting can lead to health risks, study says

Bob Dohr, Daily Herald Media 8:30 a.m. CST January 29, 2015



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Don't just sit there. Do something.

That's the upshot of a recent study that found that people who sit too much on a daily basis have an increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, cancer and shorter life spans — even if they exercise.

It's a study cheered by a Wausau-area manufacturer of office furniture that lets people stand at work, and by a local doctor who specializes in treating obesity.

"More than one half of an average person's day is spent being sedentary — sitting, watching television or working at a computer," Dr. David Alter, a senior scientist at the University Health Network in Toronto and the study's senior author, said in a statement. "Our study finds that despite the health-enhancing benefits of physical activity, this alone may not be enough to reduce the risk for disease."

The research, published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, was completed by reviewing 47 separate studies.

Dr. Olga Barchugova, a family medicine specialist at Ministry Medical Group in Weston who's board-certified in obesity medicine, wasn't involved in the research, but she said its implications are clear.

"Even if you take some separate time to exercise, if your general lifestyle is very sedentary and inactive, you're still at increased risk," Barchugova said.



Company president Bill Knighton on Wednesday demonstrates height-adjustable workstations manufactured at K & A Manufacturing Inc. in Schofield. (Photo: T'xer Zhon Kha/Daily Herald Media)

If your job is one that involves a lot of desk time, Barchugova said it can be beneficial to build in standing or active time at various intervals during the day.

"It may be helpful to find a time when you can get up every 20 to 30 minutes and be active, or at least to stand up for a few minutes," she said.

Bill Knighton, the president of K & A Manufacturing Inc. in Weston, knows a little bit about sitting and standing during the workday.

His company manufactures RightAngle products, including height-adjustable workstations and conference tables, so he keeps a close eye on such research.

"We feel that sitting is only bad if you do it all the time, and standing can be bad if you do it all the time," Knighton said. "We prefer a mix. If you stand all day, you can have issues, too."

Such products have the backing of Barchugova.

"I think that's a great idea to have desks that would allow you to stand, or even maybe to use a small treadmill or stepper while you are working at the desk," Barchugova said. "There may be some work safety procedures involved, but as research shows, people get sick and die early from eight hours of sitting a day."

Aside from the health benefits, Knighton said he believes there's an increase in productivity when employees are on their feet instead of plopped in a chair.

"The (height-adjustable) conference table is really nice that way if you're standing in a meeting versus sitting," Knighton said. "I personally feel more engaged; you're almost kind of closer to everybody because you're closer to the table. The meetings go quicker and you stay on task."

Standing also has it over sitting in another way, Barchugova said.

"Standing involves more muscles working to keep us upright and it burns more calories," she said.

People also can make healthful changes at home, Barchugova said.

"Instead of sitting on your couch watching TV, you can get on the treadmill or elliptical for 10 minutes and then sit down and watch the rest of the show if you cannot commit to an hour of exercise," she said.

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