

# RISK MANAGEMENT BRIEF



## HEALTH AND SEDENTARY BEHAVIORS

Our bodies are made to *move*. And for most of human history, we filled our days moving until it was nearly time to sleep. That was until the computer, the car, the television, video games and other conveniences wove themselves into so much of our lives. Now we spend much of our day in sedentary activities.

When we add up the hours we spend sitting at work, sitting in class, sitting in front of the computer, watching television, playing video games and commuting to and from work and school, the amount of hours we spend barely moving is surprising. In fact, children and adults in the United States spend about 55% percent of their day in sedentary behavior, that is, those things we do while sitting, reclining and lying down during our waking hours.

The long periods of time we spend sitting may have a greater association with adverse health effects and disease than we ever imagined. Recent studies suggest that sitting/reclining for long periods of time each day can lead to an earlier death – even if you exercise regularly and are physically fit. Certain specific chemical processes are activated when we sit, recline, or lie down for extended periods of time. These chemical processes occur at the cellular level in our bodies and are associated with a number of conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and poor bone health. Interestingly, these metabolic changes occur separately and independently from the positive health effects we obtain by regular exercise.

Over 60 years of scientific study supports a strong relationship between exercise and our health. Most experts agree we should spend at least 30 minutes a day or 150 minutes a week in moderate to vigorous exercise. But new evidence suggests that we need to take a closer look at our level of physical activity when we aren't exercising.

A recent study found that the persons who took more breaks from sitting throughout the day had slimmer waists, lower BMIs and healthier blood fat and blood sugar levels than persons in the study that took the least number of breaks - regardless of how much moderate to vigorous exercise the participants had.

Because the study of the health effects of sedentary behavior is a relatively new field of research, experts aren't yet providing guidelines on how best to avoid or counteract the negative effects of extended sitting time. But, some suggestions are being made.

The following practical 'activity breaks' have been offered:

- Walk over to a co-worker's desk to talk in person instead of sending an email.
- Get up to get a drink of water instead of keeping water at your desk.
- Stand up and pace when you talk on the phone.

Page 1 of 2	<b>MABE'S INSURANCE PROGRAMS</b> 621 Ridgely Ave Suite 300, Annapolis MD 21401 <a href="http://www.mabe.org">www.mabe.org</a> – 410-841-5414	Rev. 11/16/2012
-------------	---	--------------------

# RISK MANAGEMENT BRIEF



- Use copiers and printers located elsewhere in the office so you have to leave your desk chair and walk.
- Use the stairs.
- Take frequent exercise mini-breaks.
- Get up and move around during television commercials.
- Spend more leisure time doing activities that require you to move around such as bowling, skating, walking, and shopping in stores instead of online.

As much as exercise is important for our health, avoiding prolonged periods of sitting and reclining may also turn out to be important for our health.

For more information:

"2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Summary." *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans: Summary*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Nov. 2012.  
<<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/summary.aspx>>.

"Diabetes." *Role of Low Energy Expenditure and Sitting in Obesity, Metabolic Syndrome, Type 2 , and Cardiovascular Disease*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Nov. 2012.  
<<http://diabetes.diabetesjournals.org/content/56/11/2655.abstract>>.

Hamilton, Marc T., Deborah G. Hamilton, and Theodore W. Zderic. "Diabetes." *Role of Low Energy Expenditure and Sitting in Obesity, Metabolic Syndrome, Type 2 , and Cardiovascular Disease*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Nov. 2012.  
<<http://diabetes.diabetesjournals.org/content/56/11/2655.abstract%29>>.

Mark Stephen Tremblay, Rachel Christine Colley, Travis John Saunders, Genevieve Nissa Healy, and Neville Owen. (November 23, 2010). . *In Physiological and health implications of asedentary lifestyle*. Retrieved November 9, 2012,  
<<http://blogs.plos.org/obesitypa>>

Yeager, Selene. "Sedentary Lifestyle." *Womenshealthmag.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.womenshealthmag.com/health/sedentary-lifestyle-hazards>>.

"Expert Underscores Health Risks Of Sitting Still." *Medical News Today*. MediLexicon International, 18 Apr. 2011. Web. 09 Nov. 2012.  
<<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/releases/222645.php>>.

"More Breaks from Sitting Are Good for Waistlines and Hearts." *ScienceDaily*. ScienceDaily, 13 Jan. 2011. Web. 14 Nov. 2012.  
<<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/01/110111213031.htm>>.