

Can You Be an Active Couch Potato?

It may sound like an oxymoron, but yes indeed, you could be an active couch potato. It turns out that even people who exercise are at risk for health problems if they spend much of the rest of their time in a sitting or reclining position. Health experts now recommend that we engage in 30 or more minutes of moderately vigorous activity daily and that we limit sedentary behavior.

On average, we spend 8 or so hours each day typing, Internet surfing, watching TV, driving, reading, using the computer and engaging in similar activities. That's more than many people sleep! Sedentary behavior — even among people who exercise regularly — is associated with obesity, metabolic syndrome, chronic inflammation, abnormal cholesterol, high blood pressure, excess abdominal fat, diabetes, heart disease, and increased risk of death.

Researchers are now studying the benefits of breaking up sedentary behavior. It looks like simply standing for a couple of minutes each hour or walking to get a drink of water can improve health.

Try some of these strategies to break up your long stretches of sedentary behavior.

- Stand or walk while talking on the phone.
- Stretch or do squats while heating something in the microwave.

- Walk to your coworker's desk instead of calling or sending an email.
- Banish the television remote control.
- Use the bathroom farthest from you.
- Let the dog in and out instead of allowing a family member to do it.
- Do push ups against the wall or your desk at the top of the hour.

Commit to being both physically active and less sedentary. Your body and mind will thank you.

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