

# Downside of sitting

The downside of sitting


Health problems related to too much sitting<sup>1,3,7,8</sup>

Steps You can take to reduce Your risk<sup>1,3</sup>


References

## The downside of sitting

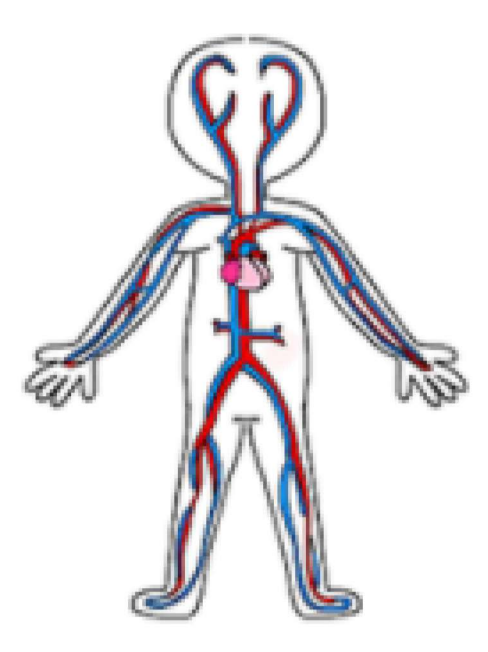
Our bodies are designed to be up and moving when we are working and playing, and to be seated only when resting. Many of our jobs have become more sedentary, with long days sitting at a desk. An inactive lifestyle, which can include sitting at a desk for a large part of the day, getting around by sitting in a car or bus, spending time watching TV or surfing the Internet while seated, can affect our bodies in several ways. For example, it can lead to the following:<sup>1</sup>




Burn fewer calories which leads to weight gain and obesity related issues




Lose muscle strength and have weaker bones. Your endurance weakens, because you are not using your muscles as much




Reduced blood circulation due less physical activity



Develop Inflammation- The body may have more inflammation due to less movement or activity



Weakened immune system. Your body's metabolism also gets affected due to reduced breakdown of fats and sugars



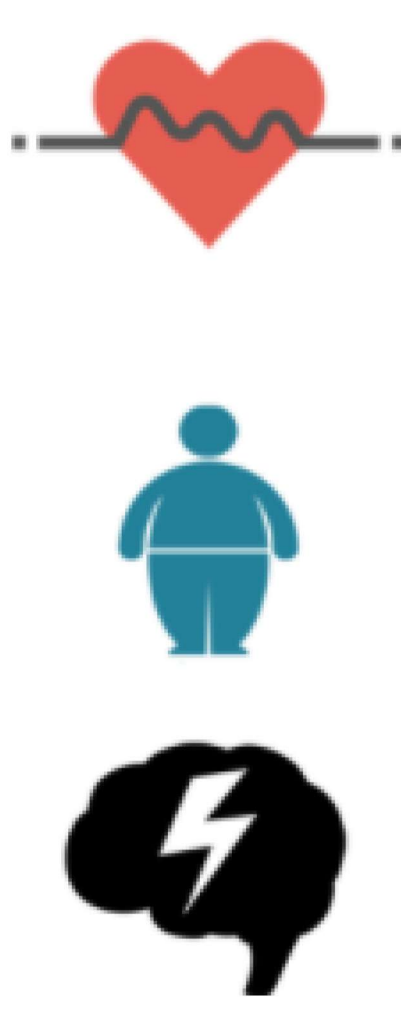
Develop hormonal imbalances due to weight gain and inactivity

Excessive sitting occurs in most people in modern society because of sociological, behavioral and biological cues. Excessive sitting is a common pathway that contributes to numerous chronic diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and multiple types of cancer. Physiological and molecular mechanisms can explain these associations<sup>2</sup>

## Health problems related to too much sitting<sup>1,3,7,8</sup>

Health issues associated with a sedentary lifestyle and not getting regular exercise can raise your risk of:

- Premature death - Most sedentary people had a 22-49% greater risk of early death
- Heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancer - Long-term sedentary behavior increases your risk of health conditions like type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Inactivity is believed to play a direct role in the development of insulin resistance
- Metabolic syndrome (increased blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the waist, and abnormal cholesterol or triglyceride levels) - The major cause of metabolic syndrome include overweight and obesity and physical inactivity
- Obesity - Research shows that people with obesity sit for an average of two hours longer each day than do people with a normal weight
- Osteoporosis and Falls
- Stroke



If you sit for long periods of time each day working on a computer, you may be at risk for developing physical strain and overuse injuries. According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, signs and symptoms may include:<sup>4</sup>



- A tingling feeling in the fingers, sore wrists, and lower back pain
- Eye strain, including redness, a feeling of dryness and/or soreness, blurry vision, and headache
- Soreness in the neck, shoulders, arms, back, thighs, and lower legs (called postural fatigue)
- Steady pain or discomfort in the muscles and tendons (called repetitive strain injury)

## Steps You can take to reduce Your risk<sup>1,3</sup>

Even if your job requires you to sit at a desk and/or spend long periods of time working on a computer, there are things you can do to help avoid or prevent some of the health risks.

### a. Make movement part of your workday<sup>4,5</sup>

- Take microbreaks to move, stand, stretch or walk around to get your blood circulating
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Use your break or part of your lunch hour to walk around the building
- Stand up and walk to a colleague's office instead of sending an email
- Have "walking" or standing meetings with co-workers instead of sitting in a conference room

### b. Use a Standing desk<sup>1,6</sup>

- People who use a sit/stand desk had less upper back and neck pain and felt more energized, comfortable, productive, and focused than people who didn't use one
- Use a standing desk or find tasks where you can stand, such as talking on the phone. Stand up and walk to a colleague's office instead of sending an email

### c. Set up your workstation properly and pay attention to your posture<sup>4,5</sup>

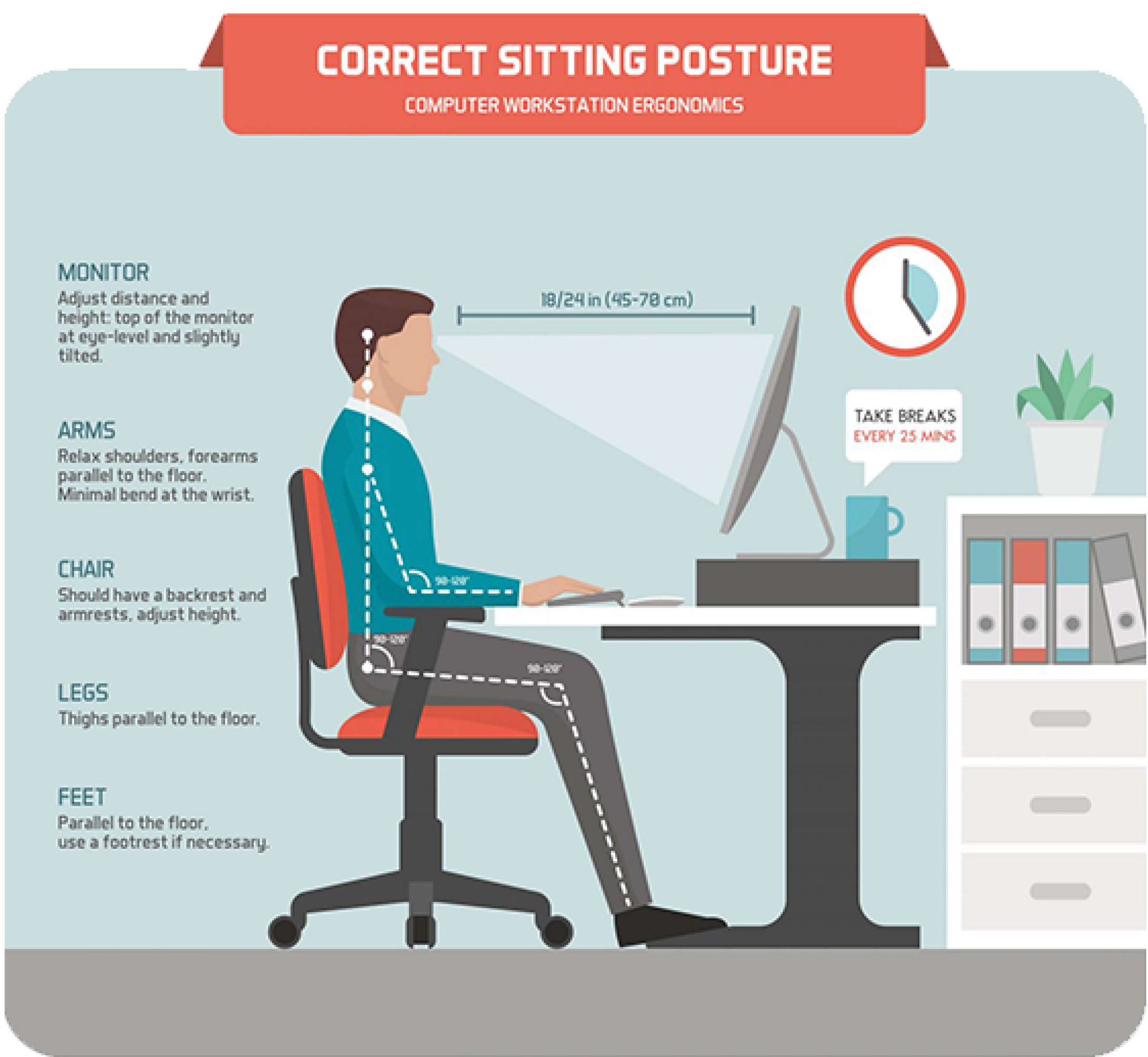


Image source: Get Healthy Stay Healthy. Is Sitting Behind Your Desk Bad for Your Health? Available at <https://www.gethealthystayhealthy.com/articles/is-sitting-behind-your-desk-bad-for-your-health> (Accessed on 26 August 2019)

- Your computer screen should be about an arm's length away from you and the top of your monitor should be at forehead level. This will help you avoid having to look up or down
- Your keyboard and mouse should be at a height that keeps your elbows at your side and bent at 90 degrees. This will help you avoid having to reach too far to use them
- When sitting, your hips and knees should be at 90-degree angles. Support your feet on the floor or foot rest
- Keep your head directly over your shoulders. Don't lean forward toward your computer

While you may not be able to avoid sitting at a desk or working on a computer for long periods of time, following these tips can help you avoid some of the health risks of doing so. Talk with your healthcare provider to learn more.

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