

Small Movements Add Up to Big Heart Health Benefits



Whether you're more likely to be working at a desk, driving your car, or relaxing in front of the TV, sitting probably takes up a significant part of your day. In fact, the average person spends more than half of their waking hours in a sedentary position. Unfortunately, sitting for long periods of time turns out to be risky business. The more you sit, the greater your risk of heart disease and more, even if you are exercising regularly.



SIT LESS, STAND MORE

Luckily, there is a solution: Find ways to incorporate more basic activity into your everyday life. Research shows that breaking up long stretches of sitting with movement can actually lower both systolic (top) and diastolic (bottom) blood pressure. The more your body's tissues need oxygen, the harder your heart muscle has to work — and even small bursts of activity help your heart grow more efficient, keeping blood pressure moderated. Your heart muscle is like any other muscle in your body: The less you challenge it, the weaker it becomes. That's why sitting for long periods of time can be so damaging.

ACTIVITY ADDS UP

Research shows that shorter bouts of activity can decrease blood pressure just as much as longer bouts. Exercise scientists suggest that spurts of activity from 3-10 minutes for a total of 30 minutes over the course of a day can be an effective way to help manage hypertension.



Here's how "collecting" physical activity could work for you:



3 minutes

Jumping jacks before a shower or bath



5 minutes

Taking the stairs several times at the mall



3 minutes

Parking farther away



10 minutes

Playing at the park



5 minutes

Having a fast-paced walk around the perimeter of the store before shopping



4 minutes

Squats during commercials

SQUEEZE IN MORE MOVEMENT

Another benefit of shorter bouts of activity throughout the day is that there's little stopping you from achieving it. You don't need to carve significant amounts of time out of your schedule. Simply find the small movements that fit into your day — take the stairs, get up from your desk once every 30 minutes to walk around the office, or do jumping jacks during each commercial break while you're watching TV. Small movements can make a big difference!

Not a Livongo member? See if you're eligible for personalized health support at enjoy.livongo.com/new.