

Born to Sit or Move?

During the past 200 years, human lifestyle has evolved gradually from one that was activity based to one that is now addicted to the chair. During the latter part of the 20th century, technology began to advance at an accelerated rate, ranging from workplace mechanization/automation, daily transportation, and the "new" leisure — electronic play.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, running parallel to technology advancement, the concept of less work and more abundant free/leisure time was brought forward. Somewhere, most of us missed the boat, as we find that we have less and less free time; and interestingly, those around us seem to be in the same predicament, including our children and teenagers. Our lives seem to be "programmed" to the hilt, full of additional stress, while, paradoxically, we desire to live better and experience improved quality of life.

Today, most of what we do at work, in our daily living (banking, shopping, etc.), and leisure time (games and entertainment) can be accomplished while sitting with minimal energy expenditure. In fact, many Americans find themselves in a seated position for up to, and in some cases more than, 13 hours per day. Unfortunately, our evolved lifestyle has produced more stress, stimulated less than desirable eating habits, and significantly decreased daily physical movement. The result has been a steady increase in body weight, chronic health challenges, and associated medical costs.

Most people are acutely aware of their weight and associated health challenges. In fact, many of us have initiated diets and exercise programs to lose weight and improve health. Unfortunately, these good intentions are frequently short-lived as enthusiasm wanes, life gets in the way, and the desired weight loss is not attained. Perhaps our focus is misplaced, and we need to view things differently. As David Katz, M.D., founding director of Yale University's Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center and author of "Disease Proof," suggests, we need to view health as wealth; health is the currency we get to spend on LIVING.

MOVING INCREASES OUR "LIVING" CURRENCY

There is no question that continuous sitting is unhealthy and lethal. Regular moderate- to vigorous-intensity exercise sessions are important. However, most people do not exercise regularly, and of those who do, the programs often are short-lived and the added energy expenditure is minimal. Table 1 below details the various components of our daily energy expenditure. The greatest opportunity to impact daily energy expenditure and positively affect health and weight control is the non-exercise activity thermogenesis (NEAT) component. NEAT encompasses all of the physical movement that we undertake throughout the day. The idea is to minimize sitting time by finding ways to move throughout the day. Simply standing more throughout the work day could burn an additional 15 Kcal per hour, whereas slow walking at 1.0 mph could result in an additional 80 to 100 kcal per hour. Table 2 presents some suggestions for increasing your NEAT.

Table 1: Components of Daily Energy Expenditure

- Basic Metabolic Rate — the amount of energy required to maintain bodily functions at rest; approximately 60% to 75% of daily energy expenditure.

- Thermic Effect of Food — energy required to process our food intake (digestion, absorption, and storage); approximately 10% of daily energy expenditure.
- Purposeful Exercise — daily planned exercise/activity sessions; the majority of Americans do not incorporate this into their daily routine; thus, impact is negligible.
- NEAT; approximately 15% to 30% of daily energy expenditure

Table 2: NEAT Strategies

- Stand instead of sitting:
 - Try a standing workstation
 - Stand whenever making or answering a phone call
 - Use a standing workstation to play computer games
- Scrap the remote(s)
- Get up and move during every TV commercial break
- Take moving breaks every 30 minutes when sitting and reading
- Take a short moving break every 30 to 60 minutes at work
- Walk around the office when reading an article or manuscript
- Have standing or walking meetings
- Try a treadmill workstation or use an exercise ball for a chair
- Take the stairs
- Park farther away from buildings
- Skip the drive-through; park and walk in instead

NUTRITION DOES MATTER

Proper nutritional intake also is a key component of our overall health currency. The *2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* identifies a healthy diet as one that focuses on fresh whole food that include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat or nonfat dairy, seafood, legumes, and nuts; low consumption of red and processed meat; and low consumption of sugar-sweetened food and drinks. Combined with appropriate portion sizes, proper nutritional intake will promote achievement of a healthy and functional weight.

SUMMARY

Health or wellness is influenced highly by our lifestyle choices, including movement throughout the day, exercise, and proper nutrition. Our focus should not be on chronological age but on "functional age"; it is not about "buns of steel" but about functional fitness. Whereas our genes make up the hardware, our health behavior is the software (what makes the hardware work). Inferior lifestyle behaviors result in less than optimal states of health and well-being and less health currency to spend on LIVING. So, if you're in no hurry to grow old, then it is time to get MOVING.

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