

## Taking Breaks from Sitting

Welcome to the Active Lives section on **taking breaks from sitting or lying down**

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1. Taking breaks from sitting can improve your mood – True or false?
2. Taking breaks from sitting can relieve aches and pains – True or false?
3. Taking breaks from sitting can give you more energy – True or false?
4. You need to take long breaks from sitting to experience any health benefits – True or false?
5. Taking breaks from sitting is good for your heart – True or false?

### Taking Breaks from Sitting Quiz – Answers

#### 1. TRUE

Research shows that people who sit for long periods of time are more likely to feel low than those who take breaks from sitting.

Research also shows that making small changes to the amount you sit can improve your mood.

#### 2. TRUE

Research shows that sitting for a long time can stiffen our muscles and joints, leading to more aches and pains.

Standing and moving around can help keep our limbs flexible and relieve aches and pains.

#### 3. TRUE

Research has shown that breaking up time sitting with a bit of moving around gives people more energy and reduces tiredness.

#### 4. FALSE

Research has shown that even very short breaks can be good for your health

In one study, taking a short 2 minute walk every half-hour improved people's blood sugar levels.

#### 5. TRUE

Research has shown that people who take breaks from sitting have a lower risk of heart disease. This is true even if people are not very physically active.

#### **Did you know that...**

Sitting for long periods can make our blood pressure worse and make our blood not flow as well around our muscles.

But regular breaks from sitting can protect against these changes



Sometimes, we sit or lie down because we need a rest or because we enjoy it. But sometimes we do it out of habit or boredom, and we don't notice how much we are doing it.

Here is a list of common activities that people do sitting or lying down.

Tick those activities you often do while sitting or lying down. You can also write in other activities you often do, such as things you do at work or when you volunteer.

- watch TV
- read the paper, a magazine or book
- talk on the phone
- use the internet or computer
- do a crossword or puzzle
- knit or sew
- fold laundry
- visit family or friends
- rest when feeling tired or in pain
- Wait for bus, train or plane
- Other (please write in) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please write in) \_\_\_\_\_

You can use this list to remind yourself of opportunities to take a break from sitting.

### Breaking the Habit

Sitting or lying down is often a habit that we do without thinking. Habits form when we do the same thing every time we are in the same time or place.

We can make a new habit by doing something different every time we are in the same time or place. The more we repeat it, the more likely it is to become a habit.

Below are three ways to make taking breaks a habit in your daily life.



### 1. Get yourself moving at home

The best way to get yourself up and moving is to place things you need further away from where you usually sit or lie down.

#### Ideas:

- Put the TV remote on the window sill or next to the TV
- Put your drink on the window sill or in the kitchen
- Leave your phone in the hall or on a table further away from you
- Keep snacks in the kitchen so you get up when you want them
- Put the tea and coffee further away from the kettle

#### Sue's Story

"I've never been one for doing any of that running or going to the gym, and as I've got older, I've started to worry about my health and whether I'm doing enough. I have a few health problems, and don't really feel I can do too much, but I thought I could try pushing myself to move more around the house.

"I've started leaving my tea on the window sill when I am reading the papers. I put it in a thermos mug so it doesn't get cold too quick. Now I find that I am getting up every 10 to 15 minutes and I can feel the difference in my energy levels!"

### 2. Stand up while you do things

A good way to take breaks from sitting is to stand up whilst you do something else. We do many of our usual activities standing up, such as cooking or doing the washing up.

#### Ideas:

- Stand for a few minutes while you watch TV
- Stand while you are talking on the phone
- Move around the kitchen while you wait for the kettle to boil
- Stretch or move around while you wait for food to heat
- Stay standing while you wait for the shower to heat or the bath to run
- Stand and pace while you wait for a bus, train or plane
- When you stand, you can also try pacing or shifting your weight from foot to foot.

#### Alison's Story

"I've had arthritis for a few years now, and some of the things I used to like doing can be hard going. I find it really hard to knit now with my fingers getting sore. I've always really liked keeping busy but have got into the habit of sitting down most evenings in front of the telly.

"My doctor recommended that I try and do something while I watch TV to keep my joints from getting stiff, so I've been trying to do one small thing each day while I watch the soaps. Yesterday I got up to water the houseplants, and today I'll do a bit of ironing while I watch. I'm still only doing a bit at a time, but it feels good to be moving about more."



### 3. Stand up when you finish things

The good news is that you do not have to stand for long to have health benefits.

An easy way to fit this into your daily life is to stand in between activities.

#### Ideas include:

- Stand up and stretch at the end of a TV show
- Stand up after you finish a book chapter or newspaper article
- Stand up during advert breaks
- Stand up after you have finished a phone call
- Stand up for a few minutes when you finish your meals – if you eat with someone else, you can do this together!

#### John's Story

"Since I retired, I've tried to stay a bit active, but there are some days when I don't have much to do out of the house. I found that I ended up watching quite a lot of TV, more than I used to. Sometimes I'd nod off and feel more tired when I woke up.

"I decided that I had to do something to keep me more alert. I tried standing up during advert breaks and doing a bit of stretching. I don't always remember to do it, but if I do, it keeps me from feeling so tired during the day."

### Concerns

It's normal to have some concerns about changing your usual habits.

Below are some of the most common concerns people raise.

#### 1. I have pain when I move

Research shows that activity is actually good for most types of pain, such as arthritis, back pain, neck pain and knee pain.

Some people find that taking breaks from sitting helps them manage pain.

If you are concerned about pain, you can always start with very easy and gentle activities, such as standing for short periods of time. Pain normally starts to improve over time even with gentle activities.

### 2. I find it difficult to stand

Sometimes people find it painful to stand, or they feel dizzy when they stand.

If you feel dizzy:

- Take your time to move from lying down to sitting, then from sitting to standing.
- Make sure you have something to lean on (like a sturdy chair) when you stand.

If you find it difficult to stand without support:

- Try using a sturdy chair or lean against a wall to help you stand

If you are concerned, try the activities when someone else can support you or in a place where you feel safe. You can also do chair-based activities to build up your strength.

If you have problems moving around, try our Strength and Balance section. It has chair-based exercises for you to start with and advice on improving your balance.

### 3. I find it difficult to move around

Some people might not feel safe walking around whilst on the phone or busy.

If you find it difficult to move around, you can still benefit from standing for a short time instead of sitting.

You can also do chair-based exercises to build up your strength.

If you are still concerned you can ask your GP for advice.

If you have problems moving around, try our Strength and Balance section. It has chair-based exercises for you to start with and advice on improving your balance.

### 4. I have to sit when I'm at work

Just like at home, the best way to get yourself moving is to place things you need further away from where you usually sit.

**Ideas:**

- Put your drink on a desk or table further away from where you work
- Leave your phone on a table further away from you
- Keep snacks in the kitchen so you get up when you want them
- Put the tea and coffee further away from the kettle
- Put your printer further away from your computer

Another way to take breaks from sitting is to stand up while you do some activities, such as:

- When you answer the phone
- When you read something on paper
- When you talk to a colleague
- When you eat your lunch or have a snack
- When you are working on the till
- If you drive a lot for work, try to take regular breaks when you can get out and move around.

### Setting Goals

Setting a goal is a good way to help you keep going with Active Lives.

You said you often do activities that involve sitting or lying down. Now you can set up to three goals help you sit a bit less when you do these activities.

Just pick the times you will take a break from sitting from the ideas below or write your own in the space provided.

**I will take breaks from sitting when...**

- I watch TV during the day*
- I watch TV in the evening*
- I read the paper*
- I read a book or magazine in the evening*
- I talk on the phone*
- I use the internet*
- I use a computer*
- I am working*
- I have an appointment with a doctor or nurse*
- I am waiting for a bus or train*
- I make tea or coffee*
- I visit family or friends*
- I knit or sew*
- I write*
- I do a crossword or puzzle*
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



It's easier to meet goals if you **plan how you are going to fit them into your daily life**. For each activity, you can pick an option to help you fit it into your life, or write your own plan in the space provided.

### Ideas:

- Keep the TV remote on the windowsill*
- Put my drink out of reach*
- Put my book or magazine in the kitchen during the day*
- Keep the phone in another room*
- Ask someone else to stand and move with me*
- Put a note on the bathroom mirror to remind me to stand up*
- Put a note on the kettle to remind me to stand*
- Set an alarm on my phone to go off once a day*
- Set an alarm on my computer to remind me to stand up*
- Get a drink of tea/water from the kitchen during an advert break*
- Get a drink of tea/water from the kitchen at the end of a TV show*
- Put a note next to appointment time/date*
- Put a note on or with my travel ticket*
- Ask someone else to remind me*
- Keeps snacks or drinks on a table away from my desk*
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**It's a good idea to write down your goals and put them in a place you will see them, like on a noticeboard or fridge.**

**You can use the table on the next page to do this.**



## My Goals

	I will take a break from sitting when...	To help me achieve this goal I will...
Goal 1		
Goal 2		
Goal 3		