

We've all heard the sensationalist headline "Sitting is the new smoking". But is this just clever marketing by people wanting to sell expensive furniture? Or are there real health benefits from using a standing desk?

In this article, we'll peel back the marketing fluff and find out delve into the science of both sitting and standing for long periods of time. We'll look at peer-reviewed studies and listen to what the experts are recommending for our health. After reading, you'll be able to make an informed decision on what kind of desk you need in your office.

The Anti-Sitting Movement

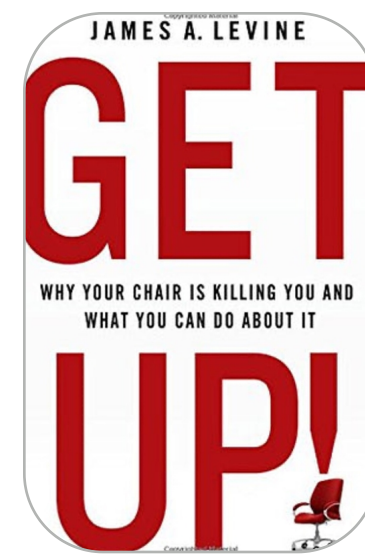
In 2014, James Levine, a professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic, published a book titled "Get Up! Why Your Chair is Killing You and What You Can Do About it".

In this book, he discussed the many health implications of sitting for long periods of time, especially while at work.

In a later interview with the LA Times, the professor was quoted to say that:

"Sitting is more dangerous than smoking, kills more people than HIV and is more treacherous than parachuting. We are sitting ourselves to death."

Now while there certainly is a wealth of research and information to support this theory, one thing has to be said about Professor Levine's motivations.



Half of the book extolled the virtues of an active lifestyle versus a sedentary one, while the other half seemed to be a thinly veiled advertisement for his latest invention, the treadmill desk.

Now we're not insinuating that Professor Levine took aim at sitting in order to sell more treadmills, but it is important context if you want to be objective.

So, let's look at the facts.

What Do the Experts Say?

If we believe in Professor Levine's opinion, we're claiming that sitting for more than eight hours a day is **worse** for your health than a pack-a-day smoking habit.

In a [2018 paper](#) published by the American Public Health Association, a meta-analysis of health outcomes of people who smoked cigarettes was compared against those who lived a sedentary lifestyle. The data overwhelmingly demonstrated that smoking had far greater risk and hazard ratios in those that smoked when compared to those that simply weren't very active. In fact, amongst a sample size of 100,000 people, smokers experienced 2000 excess deaths versus 190 in the sedentary group. [In a publication by Science Daily](#), University of South Australia epidemiologist Dr Terry Boyle was quoted as saying.

"The simple fact is, smoking is one of the greatest public health disasters of the past century. Sitting is not, and you can't really compare the two,"

So, if the “sitting is the new smoking” catchphrase is just a clever marketing tool, should we all go back to sitting for eight hours a day?

The short answer is no. While sitting might not be on the same toxic habit level as smoking, is standing all day any better?

Is Standing All Day any Better?

Before you ditch your office chair and commit yourself to a life on your feet, it's important to understand that simply standing is not much better for your health than remaining seated.

In fact, in a 2018 study published by the American Journal of Epidemiology, researchers found that workers who spent their entire shift standing experienced the same poor health outcomes similar to those who sat down all day.

It may seem counterintuitive, but positive health benefits only really apply to people who regularly switch from seated to standing and back again.

The Health Benefits of Using a Standing Desk

1. Reduced Risk of Obesity

Prolonged sitting has been linked to a higher risk of obesity, as well as other health problems.

By using a standing desk, your body burns more calories than if you were sitting down. In fact, when compared to an afternoon of sitting down, studies have demonstrated that the same amount of time spent standing burns at least an additional 170 calories. This adds up to 580 calories over the course of your working week. That additional calorie burn can be the difference between you maintaining a healthy weight or staking on the kilos.

2. Improved Posture & Reduced Back Pain

Sitting for long periods of time can lead to poor posture, which can result in back, neck, and shoulder pain. Standing desks promote good posture by forcing you to stand up straight and engage more of your core muscles.

In a [study released by the CDC](#), they found that in just 4 weeks, participants who had switched to a standing desk reported a 54% reduction in upper back and neck pain.

Likewise, [a 2014 study](#) determined that standing desks provided up to a 32% improvement in lower back pain.

3. Reduced Risk of Cardiovascular Disease

We've known about the link between standing and heart health for over 70 years. Back in 1953, it was noticed that train drivers were much more likely to have heart-related illnesses when compared to the conductors that they worked with. The difference between the two jobs was that the drivers spent their shift sitting while the conductors were on their feet.

Since then, we've spent a lot of time trying to understand just how much a sedentary lifestyle can affect the heart. In a [2014 study](#), researchers concluded that prolonged sitting could increase the risk of heart disease by up to 147%.

It may have to do with improved circulation, a benefit that comes from stretching those legs and straightening that back.

4. Reduced Risk of Cancers

A [2011 study](#) found that prolonged sitting could be responsible for as many as 49,000 cases of breast cancer and 43,000 cases of colon cancer every year in the U.S.

Research has also linked a sedentary lifestyle with significant risk of lung cancer, prostate cancer, endometrial cancer, and ovarian cancer.

5. Increased Productivity & Energy Levels

When you stand up, your blood flows more freely, which means more oxygen and nutrients are reaching your brain. This can help you stay alert and focused, which can result in increased energy levels and elevated moods.

A [7-week study conducted in 2011](#) followed a group of people who swapped from a standard sitting desk to a standing desk. They recorded their self-reported mood levels and compared them to their actual work performance throughout the study.

Participants reported less stress and fatigue than their sitting counterparts with 87% of them saying they had more energy and vigour than they did before swapping. Not only that, but they were outperforming their sitting colleagues and were more productive than before the swap. Interestingly, their performance and moods slipped back to normal levels once the study finished and they swapped back.

From [further research](#), excessive sitting and a sedentary lifestyle has also been linked with depression and anxiety.

6. Live Longer

The last and probably most important benefit of all is a long, healthy life. Studies have found a strong link between increased sitting time and early death. It's not surprising when you consider all the side effects of a sedentary lifestyle. From cardiovascular disease to Type 2 diabetes and cancer, getting up and moving can put years back on the clock.

One [2012 study](#) estimated that if everyone reduced their sitting time by three hours a day, the average American's lifespan would increase by 2 years!

Stand Up for Your Health

While we've well and truly myth busted the "Sitting is the new Smoking" catchphrase, the documented health benefits of using a standing desk can't be ignored. Whether you are looking to improve your posture, reduce your risk of obesity and certain types of cancers, or increase your energy levels, a standing desk can help. So, why not stand up for your health today?



We're Only a Phone Call Away.

If you're looking for a standing desk for your next project or product line there are a [few different types](#) to choose from. Feel free to give us a call at [02 8188 2732](tel:02-8188-2732) so we can discuss some options.

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