



Session 17: Sit Less for Your Health

You know how important it is to reach and maintain your healthy lifestyle goal of at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week. However, there is something else that you can do to increase your movement and improve your health.

**The amount of physical activity you do in a day is important.
How much time you spend sitting also matters.**

To live a healthy lifestyle, public health research suggests that people need to **both**:

- maintain adequate levels of physical activity and
- limit the amount of time spent sitting.

It is possible to reach your 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity goal each week, yet still sit too much. This is often referred to as being an “active couch potato”.

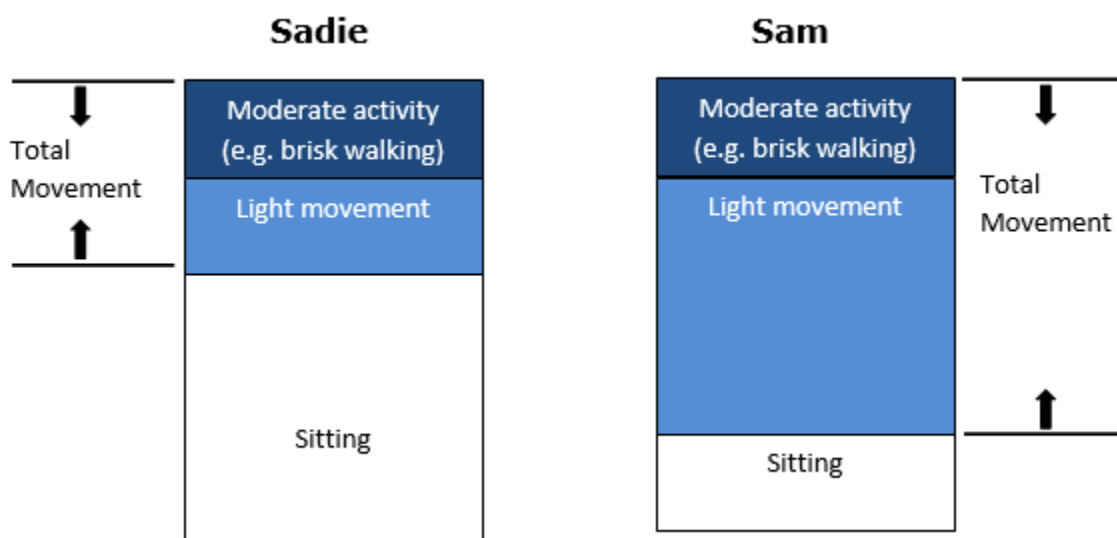
Two people could have the same amount of moderate intensity activity (such as brisk walking) but differ on the amount of sitting and light movement they do. Let’s look at an example about **Sadie and Sam**.

- Sadie is a computer analyst.
 - At work: She spends most of her day sitting.
 - At home: She enjoys spending time on the computer playing games, connecting with friends, and searching the internet.
- Sam is an elementary school teacher.
 - At work: He spends most of his day on his feet in front of his class and rarely sits.
 - At home: He enjoys spending time cooking, gardening, and doing little projects around the house.

Session 17, Page 2

The graphs below show how much time Sam and Sadie spend in an average day doing moderate activity, light movement, and sitting.

- **Moderate activity** (like brisk walking): Sam and Sadie spend about the same amount of time doing their moderate intensity activities.
- **Light movement**: Sam spends much more time doing light movement during the day.
- **Sitting**: Sadie spends much more time sitting during the day.



- **Total Movement**: Although Sam and Sadie have the same amount of moderate activity, there is a big difference in their amount of daily **total movement**. Sam is getting much more per day than Sadie.

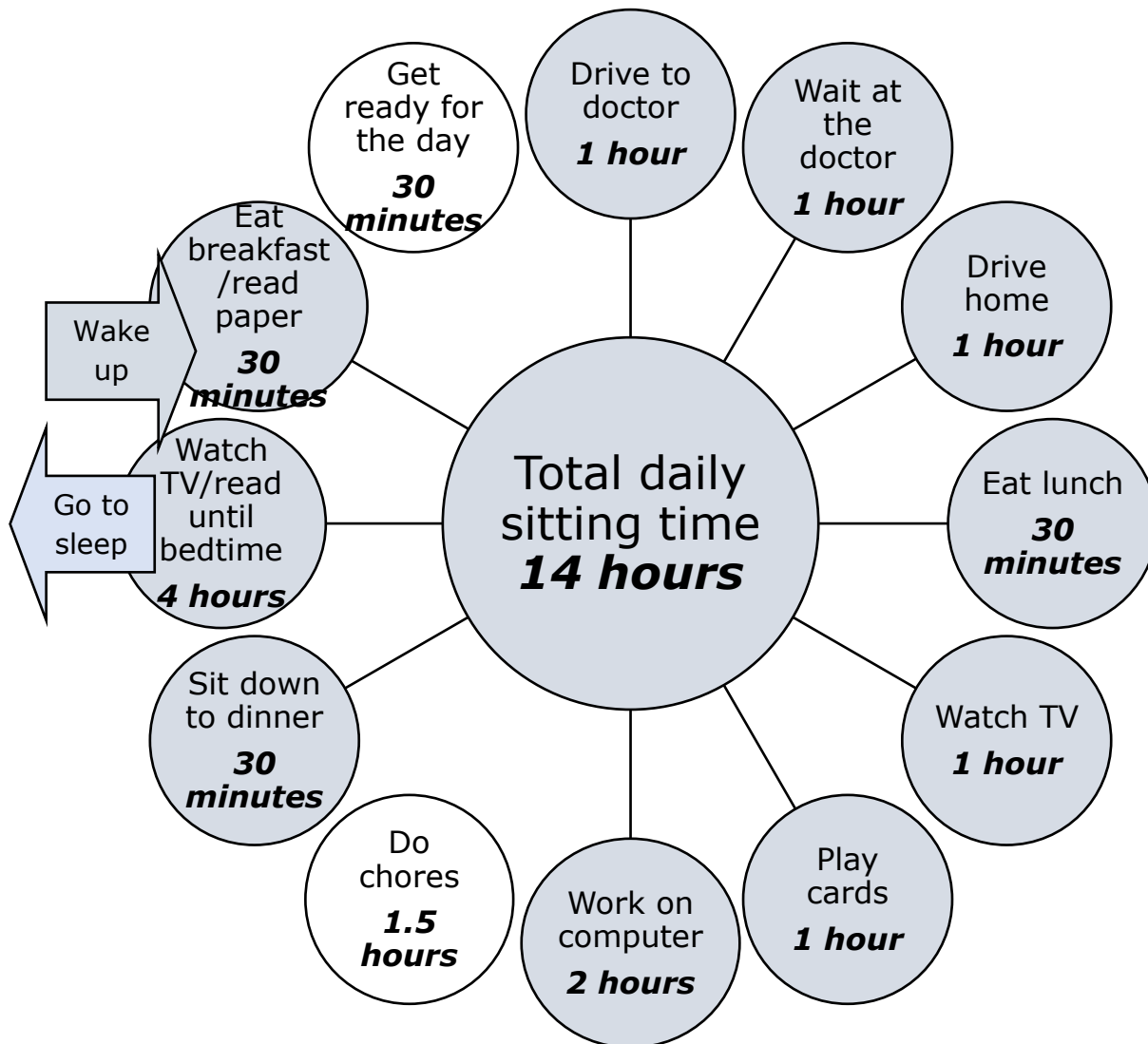


Sitting is Becoming the New Normal

Progress over time has led to less and less movement in any given day. In general, people now perform most of their day-to-day tasks with little physical effort.

- The good news is that you tend to get more done in a day.
- The bad news is that the need to move is being removed, little by little, from your daily routine.

On average, adults spend more than half of their waking hours sitting. It is amazing how easily sitting time can add up:





The Problem with Too Much Sitting

Research is finding that long bouts of time spent sitting can be harmful to your health. Let's look at a few studies:

- In the DPP, the risk of developing diabetes in overweight adults with pre-diabetes increased an average of 3.4% for each hour spent watching TV per day.
- Pima Indian adults who watched an average of 3 or more hours per day of TV weighed more than those who watched less.
- An Australian study showed that more than 2 hours of TV viewing per day was associated with an increased risk of death from heart disease and all other causes.
- Another Australian study found adults who broke up long bouts of sitting time by getting up and moving around had healthier blood cholesterol and glucose levels than those who do not.
- A review of a large number of research studies found that higher amounts of sitting were related to a higher risk of:
 - diabetes
 - heart disease
 - some types of cancers
 - early death

How much sitting is too much?

So far, not enough is known to set a healthy limit on the total number of hours in a day you spend sitting. In general, it is safe to say that most people would **benefit from sitting less**.

Here are some tips from experts:

- Limit screen-based sitting time (e.g. TV or computer) outside of work to **less than 2-3 hours per day**.
- Break up long continuous bouts of sitting with periods of movement (standing up, stretching, walking around).



Sitting Less

Look at your 7-day Sitting Diary from the last session.

- What are your thoughts about the amount of time you sit?

- When did you tend to sit for a long period?

To get started “sitting less” think about:

- Where can you **break up** long periods of sitting with a brief movement break (standing up, stretching, or walking around)?
- Where can you **replace** a bout of sitting with a physical activity that lasts about 10 minutes or more?

You can find ways to “**sit less**” in many areas of your daily life. Think about a typical day. How much time do you spend sitting in each of these four major areas?

- **Home**
- **Work**
- **Transportation**
- **Out and about** (social or on your own)

Target blocks of time when you can sit less. What can you see yourself doing to make these changes?

| | Reduce total sitting during the day | Break up long periods of sitting |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Home | | |
| Work | | |
| Transportation | | |
| Out and About | | |

Session 17, Page 6

Here are some more ideas. **Check the ones you would like to try.**

| At Home |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Get up and move around the house during TV commercials<input type="checkbox"/> Read the mail/newspaper while standing at the kitchen counter<input type="checkbox"/> Do household chores or exercise while watching television<input type="checkbox"/> Fold laundry while standing<input type="checkbox"/> Stand or pace while on the phone |
| At Work |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Get up and take a break from your computer every 30 minutes<input type="checkbox"/> Take breaks from sitting in long meetings<input type="checkbox"/> Stand to meet with a visitor at your work space<input type="checkbox"/> Stand during phone calls<input type="checkbox"/> Drink more water – going to the water cooler and bathroom will break up sitting time |
| Transportation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Park your car further away from stores, the shopping mall, or work<input type="checkbox"/> Stand up and move around during long airplane flights<input type="checkbox"/> Offer your seat to a person who really needs it when riding the bus<input type="checkbox"/> Stop and take regular breaks from sitting during long car trips<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid using the car for short trips – walk or bike instead |
| Out and About |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Stand instead of sitting to have coffee<input type="checkbox"/> Suggest an active option when meeting a friend for a visit<input type="checkbox"/> Take breaks from sitting when playing a game<input type="checkbox"/> Get up after dinner instead of sitting at the table |



Ways to Achieve the “Sit Less” Goal

In addition to doing your planned physical activity, you are now encouraged to “sit less”. The first step is to **be aware of your sitting habits throughout the day**. Then find ways to **reduce your sitting time**.

To help you “sit less”, remember these key ideas:

Replace sitting activities with non-sitting activities

Decrease daily screen time (TV, computer, tablets, smart phones)

Avoid long periods of sitting. Break up your sitting time as often as possible.

There are two ways to help you “sit less”:

1. TABS = Take A Break from Sitting

- **TABS** is when you break up your sitting time by standing up. In other words, a “sit-to-stand” moment. This can be done in many ways.
- Each time you break up sitting by standing up counts as a TABS.

Once you have been successful at adding TABS into your day, you can build on this by adding Super TABS.

2. Super TABS

- This is a TABS that lasts 10 minutes or more. It is a longer **block** of time in which you replace sitting with standing or moving.
- Can be anything from standing still to taking a brisk walk.
- Helps you achieve even more health benefits.

Double Bonus: If your **Super TABS** involve physical activity at least as intense as a brisk walk, it can be added toward your daily activity goal.



The "Sit Less" Goal

The GLB daily "sit less" goal is to do at least:

- **5 TABS** (quick break) and
- **1 Super TABS** (longer break of 10 minutes or more)

Get started:

- Take at least 3 short breaks from sitting (**TABS**) per day.
- Think of your typical day. List 3 times when you could break up your sitting time and do a **TABS**.
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- Record using the "**Sit Less**" Tracker. Research suggests that self-monitoring a behavior will help you be more successful.

Keep going:

- **Add** more **TABS** to reach the goal of **5 TABS** per day.
- **Add 1 Super TABS** per day.
- Work slowly and steadily toward this goal over the next month.

| | |
|--------|---|
| Week 1 | Complete 3 TABS each day |
| Week 2 | Complete 5 TABS each day |
| Week 3 | Complete 5 TABS and 1 Super TABS each day |

Once you reach this goal, you may choose to add additional **TABS** and **Super TABS** to your day.

A final thought..."**Failing to plan is planning to fail.**"
- Chinese Proverb



To Do:

Check the boxes when you complete each item:

The Basics:

- Keep track of your weight.
- Record what you eat and drink using your preferred method. Come as close as you can to your calorie and fat gram goals.
- Record your physical activity using your preferred method. Come as close as you can to your activity goals.
 - Be physically active for at least 150 minutes per week.
 - Aim for an average of at least 50,000 steps per week.
 - Include resistance training at least 2 times per week.
- Keep moving throughout the day.

What's New:

- Complete 3 **TABS** each day next week.
- Keep going by following the chart on page 8. Complete your **TABS** and **Super TABS** each week over the next month.
- Keep track of **TABS** and **Super TABS** by using the "**Sit Less**" **Tracker** (pages 10-11).

References and further reading for those who are interested:

Fitzgerald, S. J., Kriska, A. M., Pereira, M. A., & De Courten, M. P. (1997). Associations among physical activity, television watching, and obesity in adult Pima Indians. *Medicine and science in sports and exercise*, 29(7), 910-915.

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Healy, G. N., Dunstan, D. W., Salmon, J., Cerin, E., Shaw, J. E., Zimmet, P. Z., & Owen, N. (2008). Breaks in sedentary time beneficial associations with metabolic risk. *Diabetes care*, 31(4), 661-666.

Dunstan, D. W., Barr, E. L. M., Healy, G. N., Salmon, J., Shaw, J. E., Balkau, B., & Owen, N. (2010). Television viewing time and mortality the Australian diabetes, obesity and lifestyle study (AusDiab). *Circulation*, 121(3), 384-391.

Wilmot, E.G., Edwardson, C.L., Achana, F.A., Davies, M.J., Gorely, T., Gray, L.J., Khunti, K., Yates, T. and Biddle, S.J. (2012). Sedentary time in adults and the association with diabetes, cardiovascular disease and death: systematic review and meta-analysis. *Diabetologia*, 55, pp.2895-2905.

Group Lifestyle Balance™ – “Sit Less” Tracker

Name: _____

| Day | TABS – short breaks from sitting. Goal = 5 or more per day. | Super TABS – Replace 10 minutes or more of sitting. Goal = 1 per day |
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